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MARGARETHE VERFLASSEN

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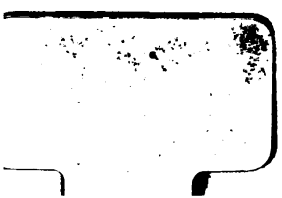

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MARGARETHE VERFLASSEN.

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"Lord take from me all that keepeth me from Thee,
Lord, give me all that helpeth me to Thee,
Lord, take me from myself
And grant me to belong alone to Thee."

"*B. Nicholas von der Flue.*

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MARGARETHE VERFLASSEN.

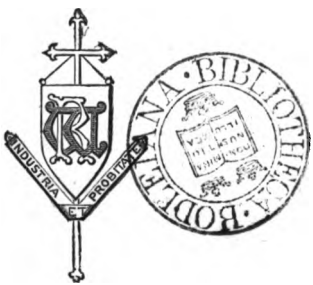
A Picture from the Catholic Church.

BY

A. H.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

MRS. SMITH SLIGO.



LONDON:
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1872.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following pages are fairly and truly what they profess to be—a faithful portrait of a noble and unselfish soul, who passed her whole life in works of charity, and who did her very best to fulfil the precept enjoining us to love the Lord our God with our whole hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves, for His sake. This translation was undertaken in consequence of a very favourable review of the German original, which appeared last November in our principal Catholic newspaper, and which represented the work as useful and edifying, and said that a translation of it into English would be acceptable. The author of the book was a Protestant—she is mentioned towards the latter part of the work, under the name of Antonie. She performed her task of biographer most conscien-

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tiously, and had decided Catholic tendencies. This will not occasion much surprise to those of her English readers, who, from a long residence in Germany, may have had cause to observe what a general movement towards the Catholic Church there is among the most pious and thoughtful Lutherans, and which will assuredly bring about the happy return of millions to the true fold, when better days shall usher in the Church's triumph. The reader of the following pages is requested to bear in mind the fact, that, during the lifetime of our heroine, religion in Germany was only beginning to recover from the baneful consequences of the first French revolution, and from the oppression the Church underwent at the hands of the secular powers. Even yet the traces of that influence appear in the schism of the so-called "Old Catholics." Gretchen's ignorance of many points which are perfectly well understood by the children of our own poor schools, can only be traced to this cause, and the reader will be interested to see in it a proof, how much good the light and grace of the recent Œcumenical Council will produce among the excellent and pious German Catholics.

BRUGES, Feast of the Epiphany, 1872.

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MARGARETHE VERFLASSEN.

CHAPTER I.

HER CHILDHOOD.

GRETCHEN'S family, by the father's side, came from the Netherlands, and was originally called Van der Flassen, afterwards changed into Verflassen. Her grandfather lived at Dietz, in Nassau, and was an artist, as were also his sons. Margaret's father did not rise above the requirements of the artistic taste of the period, as a St. Antony of Padua, which formerly hung in the Church of St. Castor at Coblentz, can testify. But he was a very industrious man, who up to a very great age—he died in his ninetieth year—kept a drawing school in his house. A childlike and innocent expression rested on his noble features, and his delicate form was always so tidy and neat,

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that it was a pleasure to see him, and everyone thought it natural that his daughter should look at him with a certain pride, and feel pleased when told that she resembled him. In his early years he had been much at the Court of the Prince of Trèves, and the manners of that time set off to advantage his own homely simplicity. He would relate much and pleasantly about the days when he and his brother, as young artists, used to wander up and down along the Rhine, painting castles and abbeys, and how they would linger over their work in the convent churches, that they might catch a glimpse of the nuns behind the grille.

Then again he would tell of the many changes in life's experience, of courts, monasteries, and pilgrimages; of singularly adventurous men, and wonderful deeds; of the good, gracious Prince Clement Wenzeslaus, and the horrible Eulogius Schneider, the clerical professor and bloody *sans-culotte*, of Chancellor La Roche, and his son-in-law Councillor Möhr, the monster, as Charles Augustus of Weimar calls him;—and of many other things.

The author of the Rhenish Antiquarius visited him often, and probably made use of many of his tales. Half sad—for melancholy was an heir-loom in his family—half humorous, irritable, impetuous, of timid character, he was governed by his wife,

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who was one of those women who make order, piety, and diligence often suspicious qualities, and who, by means of these three, ruled her house as with an iron trident. Severely holding to morals, giving to each one his own, practising good works, enterprising, fearless and unbending, she was the kind of wood out of which opportunity might have carved a martyr. Although in her later years her life was divided, outside, between the market and the church, within doors, between bustling housekeeping and practices of devotion, yet in earlier times she had truly assisted her husband in providing means for the maintenance of the household, and the education of her two daughters, the only two remaining out of fourteen children—insomuch as, for many years she had kept a school. But the peaceful course of daily life gave her no scope for her important qualities, and as her amiability diminished, and, the older she grew, she felt only a sullen apathy for all beyond her little circle, and she was unapproachable for gossip or news, intercourse with her had its difficulties. Many a time the father would smile, when at table, her bony brown hand put upon his plate the fruits of her reflection and labour, at the thought that it was the beauty of that hand which had led him into matrimony. For once, while taking holy water on

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leaving a church, he had been so enchanted by the lovely fingers of a young maiden, who dipped her hand at the same time with his into the font, that he ran after her, and finding her face no less beautiful than her hand, he made her acquaintance, and engaged himself to her almost before he was aware of it. Of their fourteen children, the only survivors were Margarethe, or Gretchen, as she was usually called, and another sister, some years older; all the rest had died young. Gretchen, the youngest of all, was born on Easter Day, the 17th of April, 1808,—a weak and sickly child, yet one whose disposition and peculiarities were early developed. Thus a trait of her first childhood was somewhat symbolical of her later life. Her father held her once in his arms before a stone image of the Mother of God: the child looked long and earnestly at it, then she stooped down, and took off her little stocking. To her father's question, what she was doing that for? she replied, that "the child Jesus had bare feet, and was cold," therefore she wished to give Him her stocking! What then she wished to do to His image, she did her whole life through to the lowliest of His brethren. How many naked has she clothed, how many poor children has she tenderly compassionated! Her talent early appeared, for taking hold of things by the right end.

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She was still very young, when once, going to school in the hard winter time, she saw a child sitting crying on the doorstep of a house: immediately she went up and asked what was the matter? Its mother had gone out and locked the door. Gretchen took the child by the hand, and led it into the room of one of the adjoining neighbours, who were quite unknown to her, saying, "Let this child wait at your window to watch for its mother, it is too cold outside."

The mistress of the house soon after met Madame Verflassen, and told her how well Gretchen knew the best thing to do. The breakfast that she took to school with her, she gave away to poor children on the road. Along with these dispositions her strong character developed itself in uncontrollable self-will, which her father in vain endeavoured to subdue by severity. On one occasion he held her leaning over the window, and threatened to throw her down if she would not give in,—but however frightened Gretchen was, and she remembered that moment all her life long, she still persisted in her obstinacy, and her father was obliged, with a sigh, to take her in again. Another peculiarity gave him no less anxiety: her sense of the ridiculous, which neither terror nor piety could bridle. He was heartily angry and beat her, once, when she saw a

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workman fall from a scaffolding, and broke into loud laughter at his face. On another occasion also, Gretchen recollected a severe punishment. Going with her father to church, she saw a horse that had fallen down trying with difficulty to rise up amongst its harness. And after that, when the old Franciscan who said Mass was trying stiffly to rise off his knees, she found the resemblance between him and the horse so remarkable and striking, that she pulled her father's sleeve, and said, laughing: "Just look at Father Joseph, isn't he exactly like that old horse?" Her mother, who never missed church, always took the children with her. When they had finished their prayers at Mass, and grew impatient, the mother used to say to them: "Now say ten Our Father's." Gretchen made what haste she could, and then pulled her mother, to shew she had done, and what next? Then Paters and Aves accumulated, till the *ite missa est* put an end to the whole. But if Gretchen had little pleasure in going to church, confession was altogether distasteful to her, and more than once she declared, that rather than do it, she would turn Lutheran.

Her parents thought it of sufficient consequence to complain of her to the old Franciscan Father, who had been for many years the friend

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of the family. One evening, when her father was from home, and her mother went in and out of the room, he took the child on his knee, made her confidential, and after he had carefully and imperceptibly induced her to acknowledge many of her childish misdeeds, he set her down again on her feet, saying, "Now, Gretchen, you have made your confession." From that time she accustomed herself to it, whether she liked it or not, until a new difficulty arose. It became quite insupportable to her always to confess the same sins; she thought it insupportable for herself and for her confessor; and after she had tormented herself for some time about it, she thought she had found a remedy. In the table of examination of conscience she had found a great many sins whose names and meaning were quite unknown to her, and since that of itself gave them in her eyes a peculiar charm, in her next confession she frankly accused herself of them all. The confessor started, but observing that the child did not understand what she was speaking of, he asked her gravely how she could make such a confession? Gretchen acknowledged how it had happened, and added naively, that she thought it must be more agreeable to his reverence to hear something new, and not always "the same old song!"

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Without fortune, as her parents were, they early thought of giving their children, and especially to Gretchen, who evinced most disposition for it, such an education as would enable them to make their own way in the world. With this view they sent Gretchen, at fourteen years of age, to a convent school at Dienge, near Metz, an institution in which the teachers did their best, though without any remarkable flight in education and learning. Some of the mistresses were beloved, others not; on the latter tricks were played, and Gretchen, a mischievous child as any could be, was not behind on such occasions. Yet the spiritual life of the house developed her own religious feelings, and among all the noise and distraction she was often suddenly seized with such a longing after the holy sacrament of the altar, that she hastened away to the convent church, where, when she was missed, they were accustomed to find her, often asleep on her knees on the steps of the high altar. Once, when they had forgotten her, she spent the whole night there, half waking half sleeping. The strong feelings of her nature were also developed in another way, by her passionate attachment to one of her companions. The youthful impetuosity and secrecy with which she conducted herself even drew on her the suspicion that beneath it she concealed too great

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an intimacy with a music master; a misconception of her character which offended her, without any attempt on her part to clear herself of the suspicion.

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CHAPTER II.

THE HOSPITAL.

THE year 1825 was a year of grace for Gretchen's native town. As the sun, through riven clouds, lights up solitary patches of a dreary landscape, so at that time Coblentz lay in the beaming reflection of God's mercy. The banner around which all now assembled was the Civil Hospital, which, at first a Franciscan Monastery, had once been given to the town by Napoleon; then in time of war, taken away again, used as a lazzaretto, and had now been given back to them by the Prussian Government. This was brought about chiefly by the endeavours of Town-Councillor Dietz, whom Clemens Brentano calls "an angel of his country," an expression that no one who knew his labours would consider exaggerated. In his book, "The Civil Hospital of Coblentz," Clemens Brentano describes how they set about their work: "their eager hurry

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to clear it out and clean it; the zeal with which, according to the given plan, they took down walls, tore up flooring, made new stairs and new rooms, all bore the character of the joyful impatience with which sincere love, after long expectation, puts out all its strength to prepare a triumphal arch for a returning father; and all beholders rejoiced, for it was Christian charity and mercy towards all human suffering that was about to make its entry, for which the path was decked, and for whose blessed labours the chambers were comfortably prepared."

The hospital had become an object of universal interest, in which every one took part, according to his means and ability. The life and stir of these days has, indeed, faded down to only a remembrance, but whoever has entered these chambers must have felt that heavenly mercy set up her dwelling there, from which a living stream of comfort flowed for thirty-four years over the desert land of human sorrow. Yet another secret witness of that blessed time is preserved in the lives of those who, awakened by the rays of eternal love, stretched forth their youthful powers to meet the fresh morning breeze of a day of good works,—with the midday sun they rested not, and only in the evening, when the Father of all pays to each his wage, they received theirs in everlasting rest. They knew

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how to keep alight the heavenly fire, to be to them a guide upon their way, and a beacon of safety to many a poor soul wandering in the darkness.

While they were engaged in making the hospital habitable, they opened negotiations with the Order of the Sisters of Mercy of St. Charles at Nancy, to take charge of it. All sorts of difficulties arose, and until these were disposed of, three friends of Herr Dietz resolved to open it for the reception of the sick and needy. These were Apollonia D., Louisa H., and Pauline F. All three came from a distance. Clemens Brentano writes thus about them.

"Coblentz, April 8th, 1826.

"Our three young ladies have now served the sick in the hospital, with great charity and piety for half a year, they have also helped many in the town by nursing and painful night-watching—they have even themselves carried out the dead—they have prayed with the dying, and by their love and prayers they have reclaimed many strayed and lost persons, on a sick bed. Their example attracts many other young ladies in the town, of whom several already practise the works of mercy with great edification. But where indeed could they find such a helper as excellent Dietz."

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At last, the negotiations with the Order took a fortunate turn. In October the Superioress General arrived to look at the house, and on the 10th July of the following year she arrived, to undertake it, accompanied by six sisters. All Coblentz was in the liveliest excitement. Clemens Brentano writes of these days :—"For a whole generation the people of this neighbourhood had never seen a religious, but every where they were received with joy and veneration. The children were delighted to see nuns at last, of whom they had so often heard from their grand-parents ; and the sight of the religious recalled to many pious old people the long-vanished memories of their youth, and the peaceful time of childhood, when hills and valleys, and islands, and the hearts of towns were sanctified by the dwellings of persons consecrated to God, and whence many words of comfort or of pious admonition, and many a fruitful alms proceeded, such as the world cannot give. Such people, of the middle and lower classes, remember the good old times with the more gratitude, because misfortune presses harder on them than on others, and their expressions, if we judge of the value of things by the measure of experience, are of far more worth than all theoretical rubbish. Such honest Christian people, both in the country and the town, were moved to tears by the sight of

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the nuns—it seemed to them that now only was peace sealed, that only now was stemmed the torrent of impiety which, with the Revolution had destroyed convents and churches, and that the dove with the olive branch was about to re-enter the Ark."

Once arrived at the hospital, bedecked with flowers in their honour, the nuns were solemnly received by the authorities, the clergy, and those most interested in the establishment; but before the Superioress General entered into any conversation on business, she said: "First let us greet the Master of the House," and went, accompanied by the six sisters, and by all present, to the Church, where they all knelt down in silent prayer. No one who was there can forget the sacred solemnity of that moment. At a dinner, which the Councillor had bespoken, and at which he, and some priests were present, the three former managers of the house offered their last service, inasmuch as they and some of their friends waited upon the nuns at table.

All these proceedings made a great impression on the mind of a girl eighteen years of age, glowing with youth and activity, and inclined to boundless self-sacrifice, a spirit naturally so susceptible to these influences. Before the nuns arrived, Gretchen

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had already belonged to the number of young ladies alluded to by Clemens Brentano, who had joined the three principal ones in their work. Although so much younger, she did not shrink from the most difficult undertakings. Her parents threw no obstacles in the way. Her mother held to good works, and her father had his pleasure in Gretchen, whatever she did! Only one duty she was obliged to perform in secret, because they hated it,—the washing of the dead. Gretchen remembered with horror, how once she came home from that occupation in the house of poor people, too late to change her dress and wash before going to table, without exciting suspicion. Gretchen's delicate constitution, naturally very easily disgusted, felt all the horror and repugnance that such things can awaken, and she always required to have recourse to the higher strength within her to overcome it. As an example, she always placed Apollonia D. before her, she appeared to her a saint!

Thus deeply imbued with the life of the hospital, and following with the deepest interest the negotiations with the Order regarding its future, Gretchen looked forward to the arrival of the Sisters of St. Charles with eager expectation. She had spent the previous days in assisting to prepare and adorn the house. Her heart and soul filled with nothing

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else, she could hardly sleep, and took her meals standing. Her heart beat high, when, standing in the corridor amid a joyful multitude, she saw gliding past her, the virgins consecrated to God, who had attained, in her opinion, the highest goal. And when she followed them into the church, was allowed to wait upon them at table, and was presented to them as a faithful child of the house, and joyfully greeted by them, she could hardly restrain her boisterous delight. The remembrance of that day left even a bright reflection on the withered and blunted features of her mother: she and the father liked to speak of it afterwards, but Gretchen's remembrances were mixed up with too much that was painful, for her to allude to it readily. The Sisters willingly gave her permission to continue to visit the hospital, and to learn scientifically what she had hitherto only practised as an amateur. A half-witted young man, a remains of the time when the establishment was a military hospital, was given over to her especial charge. He was not wicked, but stubborn and dirty, and they remembered in the hospital with a smile, how Gretchen used to lead him about the house and garden with a strap, and punished him when occasion required. "Poor Hannes" remembered it also, for he grinned tenderly at Gretchen even after a long absence.

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In order to feel herself really received into the intimacy of the house, it appeared to Gretchen that she required permission to watch there a night through, and one evening she begged most earnestly that her request might be granted. The Sister refused, because the night was cold, and she had nothing warm to put on.

During the conversation, Clemens Brentano drew near; he lived in a wing of the house, with the guardian of the poor, and was, at that time, unknown to Gretchen. Hearing what was going on, he went out, and returned with a dressing-gown which he put on Gretchen, saying:

"There, now you can watch."

The Sister found this remedy as satisfactory as it was comical, and Gretchen, delighted to be allowed to remain, was quite pleased. In this remarkable costume she spent her first night watch in the domain of the Order, which appeared to her ardent wishes as an earnest of the future.

Though her father may have suspected somewhat of these wishes, he was yet very far from giving his consent, and although he allowed to Gretchen all liberty in her life and actions, he still required that she should conform herself to his intentions. Part of these were that he should take his daughter to the approaching balls.

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Gretchen was far too youthfully fresh and natural to be insensible to the charm of a dance; but after she had enjoyed it to the full for a few times, she felt herself more carried away by it than she thought right, and as she could not oppose her father's wishes and remain at home, she resolved at least to render dancing an impossibility, for she did not trust her strength of will for sufficient resistance. The method she had recourse to was very like her. She put mustard blisters on the soles of her feet. The effect was far beyond the end she had in view, for Gretchen could not only not dance, but was obliged to remain in bed, and, worst of all, had to acknowledge what she had done. From that time her father let her alone with these proposals, but he was vexed whenever he thought of it, for Gretchen's pretty appearance and graceful dancing greatly flattered his paternal vanity, and he was also pleased to think of a young man, on whom she had made a great impression. Gretchen would hear nothing of it, and certainly the feeling was not mutual, for long afterwards, when she was once jestingly cautioned against a dangerous acquaintance, she replied gravely:

"Why should P. be dangerous? No one has ever been dangerous to me."

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When I first knew Gretchen she was in her twenty-seventh year, and her appearance was very striking, even imposing, notwithstanding her small figure. Her erect, almost solemn carriage, and something calm, noiseless, and steady in her movements, gave her a sort of religious air, which accorded with the features of her face. These were noble, and of firm, decided outline; too dignified to be pretty, and yet not regular enough to be beautiful. They were grave, proud, resolute, and aristocratic—not typically aristocratic, bearing the trace of a long line of ancestry, but of the kind imprinted by command over one's self, such as gives the power to govern others without difficulty, as one's self, and by virtue of which the soul is in turn governed by God alone; an expression which is often most clearly defined on the countenances of Catholic ecclesiastics.

The artist, Louis Grimm, once handed me a drawing he had made of her, with the words: "Does she not look like the niece of a Spanish cardinal?". Of her exterior we must also observe that her dress was very tidy, simple, and unconspicuous, but of the finest quality; it cost her an effort to wear a coarse and bad material. Order was an element of her life—her room was as tidy as it was comfortable. Her manner was quiet and

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even; her deep melodious voice went to the heart, and one could feel that it never would be employed for idle conversation. When she entered into herself, her features settled into melancholy, which could even become gloom; but whenever anything aroused her sympathy, her features took an expression of heartiness, warm feeling, and a slight shade of irony, which was so attractive, that, joined to all her other qualities, it aroused unlimited confidence. Of the latter she received so much that in one of her letters she breaks out into the complaint, "I am like an unfortunate peg-stand, hung all round so heavily with confidences, that the pegs are all ready to fall off."

But however troublesome it might be to her, she withdrew from no one, nor sent them away with common-place words. Whether it were question of simple poverty, or the most delicate and furthest removed conditions of life or soul, she went warmly into every thing, advised and helped where she could; and where she could not, at least she listened. Only the matter had to be something true and real to the parties themselves. All that was affected, hollow, or sentimental, she persecuted in raillery and ine arnest. Intellectual and witty, in the shrewd, rich language of her home, she always hit the nail upon the head, so that many

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complained of her as rough and hard, whereas there was not a more kind-hearted soul alive.

She never misunderstood a joke; she jested, and liked to be jested at in turn, and thereby she could easily be brought from the saddest frame of mind to harmless gaiety; as also she never lost her native sense of humour, which often was a torment to herself. She was very seldom seen to weep, and then only few tears.

To her love of silence, as before mentioned, she added the rare quality never to speak of herself, and the still rarer one, never to defend and clear herself under accusation, whether little or great, and whether the rectification might be difficult or easy—she generally only laughed. This custom, which harmonized with her proud manner, so displeased the Countess Amalie Maveldt, who was Superior of St. Barbara's institution at Coblentz, and in association with Gretchen, that she said:

"I cannot imagine, Gretchen, what makes you so proud."

And Gretchen replied, "I do not know either, but if I had been brought up behind a cobbler's stall, I should have been just the same."

And she was right. Her pride was none of that proceeding from advantages of birth, talents, or personal beauty—it was a freedom, a chastity of

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the soul against the obtrusive world, and could not depend on accidental circumstances. To it she owed great freedom from embarrassment in her actions, and also the certainty never to appear in the wrong place. She had none of the restless vanity which puts people always either below or above their real level. By nature shy and retiring, she never subjected herself to merely conventional considerations, she stood out of the way alike of strangers and acquaintances; but as soon as a reason, that she herself thought sufficient, appeared, to show how she could do others a service, she forgot shyness and dislike; just as she, though shrinking like a child from walking in the evening down a dark passage, yet crossed the churchyard at midnight alone, for the sake of a sick person, even though she thought she had seen some fearful things there.

However calm and imperturbable she might appear, this was, notwithstanding, only on the surface, and was equally the result of her natural reserve, the conflict between herself and the world, and of her own early convent education, which made self-command of the first importance. Behind this exterior she had to endure the severest combat of an extremely passionate and highly irritable nature, which restlessly kept running up and down

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the gamut of human feelings, from the highest excitement to the deepest discouragement. If any one were disposed to symbolise, he might describe her mind as the mirror of her birthplace, Coblentz, the ancient Confluentia, or meeting of the river. On one side the wildly foaming Moselle, rushing along through countless turns and windings, and on the other hand the calm, proud, even-flowing Rhine, receiving into its bosom the wild waves of the former, and carrying them tranquilly down to the eternal ocean, the home of every stream.

But if such self-concentration as Gretchen practised isolated her from others, she was always withdrawn again from it by the power of her self-forgetting charity. This latter was again divided into two currents. The one, as it were, winding among rocks, and rushing over many an advancing bulwark, embraced individual persons with a depth, a warmth and constancy which whoever has once experienced could never forget, and would always miss. The other flowed on still and calm between its blessed shores, the stream of her divinely consecrated charity—that love with which she had so early wished to give her stocking to the little barefooted Child Jesus, and in which, with a kind of intoxication, she devoted herself to the service of her Lord in His suffering brethren. This was

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never set aside, even by her most passionate attachment to individuals—to which no bodily ailment appeared disgusting, nor any soul too deeply sunk in sin for her not to compassionate—a charity she practised to her death, and of which she never had enough, boundless though it might appear.

Good words signified no more in her than does the folding of the hands of one in prayer—they were the natural expression of her ardent desire for God. And for all those qualities which raised her so high above others, she took no credit to herself. Thus once she wrote, "What you consider in me to be strength and earnestness of character, are not my property. These are gifts which I owe to my church; take me away from her, and separate me from her influence, and you will shudder at the nakedness and weakness of my nature."

Naturally reserved, and of the same mind as St. Bernard, when he said, "My secret is for myself," nothing is known from her mouth regarding the development of her interior life; we can only speak of the conditions under which it unfolded itself, and of such purposeless expressions as may have dropped in conversation with her. The childish story of her early confession stands on the threshhold of her inward life, like a little torchlight at the entrance into a mine. At the first glance, it seems

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only to light up the little circle of a naïvely child-like spirit longing for novelty; but if we regard it more narrowly, we see by its uncertain light, far down into the secret depths of a soul, that already feels the burden, and the boundless misery of sin, the empire of which is yet concealed from her, and whoever knew her deep, strong, ardent and truthful character, could not doubt, but that she often experienced the combat between the law of God and that of her members, and had to regulate the whole course of her life accordingly. If the latter led her away from the world, from its temptations and dangerous rocks, she found in her own heart a stronger one, which she could take away by none of the means placed within reach of her own will. The enjoyments other souls retired from the world find in books and the exercise of talents, did not exist for her. Her talent for drawing remained quite unheeded, even by herself. No poems gratified her feelings, no romance amused her, or showed her a flattering picture of herself, for literature was quite unknown to her. She belonged to a circle, that excludes every thing which is not found in church. She read only spiritual books, that always engrossed her more and more with the combat between heaven and hell. From these books she was met by the resplendent forms of the Saints of

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all ages, who had attained the goal of perfection, which she toiled after in vain, and thus at the same time urged her onward and discouraged her.

Gretchen at eighteen years of age may have been very different from the picture I have been trying to give. Life had not yet imparted to her that calm exterior, nor had it crowned many efforts with success, even while it broke her joyous spirit with many a failure. *This* Gretchen yet dreamed her dream of youth, as golden and as proud as any one's could be! Golden as the cloud of incense over the high Altar, when it is illuminated by the tapers, and filled with the music of the hymns and sound of bells—and proud, as that of the bride of the Lord of all the earth, who already beholds the dawn of the day when she is to be betrothed to Him with ring and veil. And between that moment of glory and blissful death to all the outward world, and the one when He will come to take her home to eternal joy, a life of happy work for Him, with Him, under the same roof with His hidden Presence in the Most Holy Sacrament—a life in which she hoped, not only to chain the strong impulses of her heart like captive lions, but to see them at her feet, changed into peaceful lambs. *Thus* Gretchen glowed in all the early pleasure of

vity, she served the hospital with mirth and

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smiles—for harmless gaiety is one of the characteristics of such Catholic institutions—she sprang up and down the stairs, so that Herr Dietz said to her: "Gretchen, if you wish to be a nun, you must first learn to walk." In the morning he took the female penitents to church, and knelt among them, overpowered by the thought of her own sins before the justice of God. And at home in her little room, she stood at the window looking over walls and neighbours' gardens, towards the big convent garden, with its clean pretty flower beds, as if it were the Garden of Paradise, trying to catch a glimpse of one of the dear sisters among the convalescents in their white blouses—perhaps Sister Tarsille, who taught her to make flowers, or Sister Cécile, whom she was allowed to help in the Sacristy, or the *trés chère mère* herself!

In such a state of mind much is possible and natural, which would otherwise appear extraordinary, and even hardly admissible, according to established ideas; this we see by an anecdote of what Gretchen then did.

While going from house to house to visit the poor, she heard that in one of the houses a young officer, a Prussian and a Protestant, was lying extremely ill of consumption, without any attendant but his servant boy; she was also told that he had

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ruined himself by his bad life, and was poor and forsaken. When Gretchen heard this, she was seized by an irresistible desire to assist this poor man, perishing, as it seemed, both in body and soul. She did not fail to perceive the difficulty, nor the impropriety, for she was anything rather than a visionary, who did not see life as it really is—she knew every obstacle perfectly well, but she knew, as in countless occasions of her life:—"With the help of my God, I can leap over walls," and without saying a word to anybody, one day she took heart, went up four pairs of stairs to the unfortunate man, and collecting all her courage, she gently knocked. At the words, "come in," her blood ran cold, and yet more so when she entered the room, for the sick man was not alone, as she supposed, but some young officers were standing and sitting round his bed, and they looked amazed at the appearance of a young girl in such a place.

Gretchen broke the silence of surprise by a few faltering words, addressed to the sick person: "She had heard that he was ill, and might require some attendance." He, however, declined all assistance, shortly, but politely; "he had all that he required," and nothing remained to Gretchen but to go away in silence. But with her quick, practical glance, she had observed in spite of her confusion, that all

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the arrangements of the room were very poor, and there was nothing to be seen that could give him any refreshment. Therefore without being disheartened by the refusal, next day she returned with a pot of jelly in her hand, and this time she went without disquietude or confusion. He was alone, and looked at her with silence and astonishment. She took no notice of his yesterday's refusal, but behaved as if her coming were a matter of course, told the boy to bring her water, mixed a drink for him, shook up the pillows, and said she would come back to-morrow. This time he made no objection, but thanked her. After that she visited him as often as she could. The boy had to light a fire for her in the little empty kitchen, that she might boil the chocolate she brought with her; she always knew how to prepare some refreshment. If his comrades were with him, they respectfully went away when she came. Usually the boy was waiting for her at the top of the stair, and told her how long his master had been lying watching for her, with his eyes fixed on the door—she was his only consolation. For Gretchen had not confined herself to bodily help alone. It was not her way to drive a probe into a person's heart, or to pour herself out in speeches of comfort and admonition, but she knelt down beside the poor man's bed,

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when he was in sore suffering or despair, and prayed. At first he took it in gloomy silence, with averted head, or even threw in many a bitter word, but by degrees the hard rind of his heart was melted, and he began to pray along with her—"many an Ave,"—and he was never tired of being told that his Redeemer lived.

The moments of despair became always fewer, the bitterness with which his young life struggled against death diminished, and he began to think of his death with calmness and resignation. One day Gretchen found him very weak. She went into the kitchen to prepare something for him, when she was anxiously called back by the boy who had remained in the room. On reaching the bed she found that the poor man had gently and peacefully expired. Gretchen would willingly have brought a clergyman to him, but he always distinctly declined it, and to force such a thing was not her way. This adventure, which appears to us to contain a singular majesty of Christian mercy, lasted many weeks, without any one knowing of it; it was only after many years that Gretchen mentioned it as a piece of youthful Quixotishness.

Clemens Brentano went to and fro amongst the before-mentioned young ladies, who were attached to the hospital. A short time before, he had suf-

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fered the loss of Sister Emmerich, and the writing out of her visions, and his book on the hospital, and the Sisters of Mercy occupied all his time. He inspired these young souls by the portions of it he communicated to them, while at the same time he both attracted and frightened them by his variable temper. For he was by turns amiable and perverse, confidential and caustic, good-natured and spiteful, charming and unbearable, according to the ebb and flow of his spirit. Gretchen however, sincerely loved him, and could always bear with him. She knew that he was inwardly unhappy, that he had much to repent of and did atone for, and that the arrogance of his disposition was hardest on himself. He often came in the evening to her parents' house, sat down to supper with them, and read out some of his manuscripts, or whatever happened to interest him. The good old people sometimes found it tedious, and they did not always understand what he put before them, beautifully and grandly as he could read. When he then looked up into their weary unsympathetic faces, he would throw back his chair furiously, exclaiming: "There is nothing to be done with you!" and would rush out at the door often without his hat. But the following evening he would come back, and neither he nor the others

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appeared as if anything had happened. They took nothing amiss in him, especially Gretchen, who would have so gladly given her parents some of her own enthusiasm.

At home it was then a weary time. Gretchen's sister had engaged herself to a young man, not quite according to the wishes of her parents. This already created no good feeling, and Gretchen's wishes were not adapted to improve it. The parents would hear as little of the Bride of Heaven as of that of the goldsmith, and the two girls spent many a night weeping, in the bedroom which they shared, the one for a heavenly, and the other for an earthly bridegroom. At length, through the intervention of kind friends, the parents softened to their daughters' distress. The oldest was allowed to marry, and Gretchen obtained permission to enter the Order of St. Charles. According to her custom, to speak least of what moved her the deepest, she had never told Clemens Brentano how seriously she thought of a convent life. When he ascertained it, he was extremely displeased, and tried in every way to dissuade her. He even went so far as to make himself out a deceiver, for he said: "Oh, it is my book that has turned your head; but don't believe all I have written; you never could endure the life with them." But

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Gretchen's purpose was older than his book, or her acquaintance with him, and just as little as he had induced her to enter on that line, could he now divert her from it. When he saw the firmness of her resolution, he at last came round, and was pleased at it, and, as a farewell gift, gave her a handsome donation for her poor.

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CHAPTER III.

ST. CHARLES.

ON a spring evening, in the year 1828, Gretchen arrived at the Hospital of St. Charles, at Nancy, in the company of Madame von L., and her daughter, who also wished to enter the Order. Next morning, the two young girls, who were too restless and expectant to sleep, rose before daylight, put on their best dresses, like soldiers on parade, or maids of honour at a court, and listened impatiently to every noise in the house, and every step, hoping to be called to their work. But beyond calling them to meals, no one troubled herself about them the whole day long, so that in the evening Gretchen impatiently said to her companion, "Indeed, Nantchen, if they don't want us, let us just go away again." Weary and disheartened, it was late when they got to sleep, and they were still sleeping soundly, when they were called next morning at four o'clock. Hastily they threw

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on their state clothes, and were then taken down to the ground floor, to a great heap of sand, and a quantity of spittoons out of the sick wards, with the order to clean them, and fill them again with sand. Other novices were standing at a large stone trough, in which they were washing bandages, cloths, and such like, which were thrown down through a trap-door to be washed. To encourage them in this unpleasant work, a crucifix was so hung, as to be reflected in the water, when in repose. Gretchen and her companions went gallantly to work, and were not at all put out, though the novices around them, mostly sturdy peasant girls, were laughing at them on account of their silk dresses, and more delicate appearance. From this first occupation, they were sent to others, one of them to one place, the other to another, and kept so busy, that half out of breath, on meeting one another, they could only exchange a proud and happy smile. In the pleasure of their new calling, they contentedly saw Madame von L. drive off. They had entered the harbour, so long ardently desired, and thought therewith they had attained every happiness they could wish for. Clemens Brentano, who saw Gretchen after her return, thoroughly describes her experiences in his book, so often alluded to, about the Sisters of Mercy, &c.,

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in which he describes the life of a novice. We cannot do better than give it in his own words :—

"In the great multiplicity of duties, some task will always turn up, even to the bravest and strongest-minded girl, by which she can prove that she has not been over-presumptuous regarding her vocation. Often at the very beginning most severe ordeals occur, the solution of which is rendered easy by the universal innocence, the strength and childlike gaiety of these handmaids of the Lord. The mistress of novices approaches the new comers, and says, 'Who wishes to practise a work of Christian mercy?' and all press round her joyfully with the cry: 'I will, I will, if my dear mother allows me!' Then she chooses out a few, and while these prepare to follow her, a young ardent maiden begs: 'Take me, oh take me, if my dearest mother will allow it!' and she wonders what delightful occupation is in store for her. 'Very well,' says the mistress of novices, 'the little German may come with us.' With glad curiosity she hastens after the others, through the long passages, and is directed to a room. Is it to support the head of some agreeable patient, or perhaps to fetch soup, or offer medicine? No, that would be a work of charity belonging to polite society. This is no house for parade service; here it is field-duty, death must be looked in the face. And so the

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zealous volunteer finds herself opposite to the cold corpse of a stranger, stretched out before her on straw. The mistress of novices says: 'Now, my children, sew up the corpse of this brother of your Lord and Master in this linen, then you will have part in the merits of St. Joseph of Arimathea, and of holy Nicodemus, for Jesus says, "whatsoever you shall have done to the least of these my brethren, you have done to me."' The moment of surprise is here one of singular proof, whether or not the maiden has a real vocation to be a true hospital nurse. The mistress of novices takes good heed how she behaves. If she were seized with disgust or horror, if she were to faint, or be overcome with violent sorrow, she would display a greater disposition for sick persons than for sick nursing. But were she to enter on her work with a kind of impetuous solemnity, that might denote a certain enthusiasm which would bring reaction after it. But how did the surprise act upon this presumptuous girl? She started a little, and as her initiated companions gave her an arch look, she blushed, and could hardly repress a youthful smile at being so surprised. But already she had needle and thread in her hand, and if she did tremble a little while threading the needle, it was not from terror, but from haste, for the others had already

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begun to repeat the *miserere* during their work, and now she adds her voice, and bravely sews the shroud around the body. If she does raise her fingers somewhat high, it proves nothing against her vocation, for it occurs less from disgust than from the fear to prick. Besides her blush and smile at finding herself so undeceived after her hasty offer, a surprise that would have horrified many, had said more for her youthful firmness than if she had had no fear whatever of a corpse. But now the dead man was shrouded and laid on his bier; and, singing the *miserere* in alternate verses, as in choir, the brave maidens carried to the dead room the corpse of the poor stranger, in whom they honoured a brother, for whom Jesus died upon the Cross. The dignity of the prayer, and the feeling that she had fulfilled a commission, the importance of which could be no more concealed under a surprise, collected her senses into gravity, as under a sunken veil. Although the young servant of the sick had been equal to her task, and though, now and then during the day, she had laughed with her companions at her presumptuous 'Take me, take me!' it might well be, that in the following night her heart might feel not so light as usual. The mistress of novices said to her, 'My child, since you have shown so much courage, you deserve

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to-night to watch the house.' And now she shews her all the windings, from the garret of the house, down through all the floors, all the sick wards, all the rooms and passages, down to the kitchen, the vault, the dispensary, the church, the court, the wash kitchen, the shed, the dead room, to the cellar, and back again ; a walk, the round of which she had to make twice during the night. She instructed her how she was to behave in every circumstance, and whom she was to call, if anybody wanted anything, what she was to do for the sick or the dying, how she was to attend to fire and light, to the fastening of doors and windows, and how she was to act if she found anything out of order, or anyone in a wrong place, or heard a noise that might be from robbers, &c. When all in the house had gone to bed, the mistress of novices gave the heavy bunch of keys and a little hand-lantern to the trembling watcher, and she began her lonesome walk. It is easy to see that this charge was one of the most difficult tasks possible to a young girl, who had never in her life done anything of the kind. In a stormy winter's night, or when thunder was rolling, to go through these long fearful passages and garrets, and many an uncanny-looking corner, and not to hurry, but to walk with particular care, when the wind

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whistled, and the woodwork creaked, to examine every part with the uncertain light of a lantern, then to wander through the long sick wards, where hundreds were groaning or snoring, and then through the windy court into the dreary cellar, and to do all that quietly or softly, so as not to disturb the sleepers, was a task, so lonesome and so *eerie*, that a young inexperienced girl might well dread it."

Gretchen did in fact remember that nightly walk simply with horror. At the moment she opened the dead room, she trembled so violently, that she had to pray before she could turn the key in the lock, and take the sheet off the corpses to see if nothing were changed in their condition. The living were often more fearful to her than the dead; in their wild, desolate faces, distorted by pain and sickness, she sometimes seemed to behold lost souls. Each of these rounds lasted four hours, for she had also to give broth to the sick, and to light the fire, that often was hard to kindle, so that this part of her task threatened to be the most difficult of all; yet everything passed over well, and without giving any cause of displeasure with her.

But a cause for greater anxiety than all else concerning her vocation was, that every day she

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felt her strength diminish. She at first tried to persuade herself that it came only from want of practice, and reflecting that her companion was able to endure it, she summoned all her energy to prevent her illness being observed. She could hardly stand upon her feet, at their common work, such as folding linen, and the like, when her strong sisters jested at her weakness, and playfully tried to drag her back and forward. However much they teased her, Gretchen took good care not to complain, she tried to laugh, and hoped to deceive them about her state. But her appearance betrayed her. One day as she was on her knees scouring the floor, the mistress of novices passed by, and stroking her on the cheek, she said compassionately: "Poor child, why are you here?" Then one morning she was set to no work, but was taken to an upper floor of the house, where old superannuated sisters were attended to. These she was to serve, and for further occupation she found a large basket of clothes to darn. Then followed very sad days. Weak, exhausted, her head full of mournful thoughts, her heart discouraged, the weary work in her hands, and around her the four imbecile old women, who from early morning till late in the evening, said their morning prayers, for when they came to Amen, they forgot what had

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gone before, and began at the beginning again, with "faisons notre prière." When the evening bell sounded at the close of such a day, a feeling of home-sickness would creep over her, and the letters she then wrote home probably bore the impression of it. Thus weeks passed away, when one day the Superioress sent for her, and told her she was to return home; that her constitution was too weak for her to fulfil the duties of a Sister of Mercy. Gretchen was thunderstruck: she had never thought that she should be sent away, and imploringly she begged them not to do it. "She was not weak, would soon get accustomed to it," and whatever else the distress of her heart suggested. Of course it was in vain. The decisions of convents are deliberate and unchangeable, and Gretchen returned to Coblentz, with a two-edged sword in her heart. That which she had believed to be her vocation, in which for years all her thoughts and wishes had centred, in fear and in hope, in sorrow and in joy,—for which all her actions were a preparation,—the band which she thought so firmly fastened to the Heart of God, and which she was so sure would lead her through life to Him, lay now torn from her like a rotten thread! And the sum total of all her meditations remained: she had given herself to God without reserve, she had

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wished to serve Him as one of the virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and He had cast her out from their holy company. The melancholy of her nature worked up these ideas on every side with unspeakable bitterness. Then the shame of going back! She and Nantchen were the first of their neighbourhood who had thought of entering the Order. It had excited great observation, and had been very much talked about. And now she came back alone. The other was allowed to stay, and she was sent away—sent away as useless! How much this "useless" comprised within itself! She did not think herself weak, why should others think so? Sometimes she was disposed to seek the cause of her dismissal in those expressions of homesickness she had written to her parents, without reflecting that the novices' letters are read by their superiors. But this only served to increase her pain; for if the thought that the Lord had rejected her from being His bride, became less vivid,—and then she would make attempts to be taken back to St. Charles,—then her imprudence in having given expression to a passing feeling, came more painfully before her soul. And with this burden, and these ruins of her life, she had to go back to the same existence she had so lately left, as if for ever! It was not much unlike

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the dead returning back. She and her relations had, after so many struggles and deliberations, at length discovered that they could do without one another. Her parents believed their daughter safely and honourably provided for, indeed her coming out was so undesired by them, and especially by her father, that up to the last moment before Gretchen's arrival, they had not the courage to tell him. When at last, however, he knew it, he remained long silent, and then said: "Well, we must not allow the child to suffer for it." This displeasure, apparently so contrary to his love for Gretchen, had its root, partly in his pride, which was wounded by her dismissal, and also in an unfortunate peculiarity with which he embittered his own life, and that of others. His natural timidity, increased by age, and by his childish inability to look closely into things, made him believe that he had not sufficient income. This care hampered and pressed on him now that he considered a provision for Gretchen would demand new sacrifices. Along with his really great love for her, and the tenderness with which he was accustomed to meet her, even if it had not required particular care on his part to express none of these thoughts, still she knew him well enough to read them in his mind, and thereby [to feel the oppression of her

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state at home yet more. And into these domestic circumstances, which were not altered in one hair's breadth by her going and coming, she returned as totally a different person; beaten, as if she had fallen among thieves, for beaten down were her courage, her joy, and her hopes. And she came, not as one beaten by the world, who says to himself: "I will arise, and go to my father," but she came back into the dark, narrow, mouldy world, as one cast out from her Father's sanctuary. She would have preferred to shut herself up altogether, for the half confused, half compassionate looks of those she met, caused her pride to bleed sorely. To the hospital she could hardly go, even to look at the garden gave her pain.

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CHAPTER IV.

MARIENBERG.

THERE were two sisters, Sophie and Therese Doll, who belonged to the circle in which Gretchen lived during the time of her preparation for St. Charles, and which was not confined to Coblentz alone. These ladies kept a girls' school at Marienberg, near Poppard. In the same year of Gretchen's return from St. Charles, they gave her the welcome invitation to enter their house as assistant teacher. The following letter from Clemens Brentano describes her position there :—

From CLEMENS BRENTANO to GRETCHEN.

"I have heard from several quarters that you are at Marienberg, that you are beloved, and what is best of all, that you are happy there. But you are silent yourself, although you may know that I take the most heartfelt interest in all that concerns

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you, and in whatever good may proceed from your intentions, under the blessing of God. At Marienberg you may learn a great deal, and can also teach much, which you owe to your good parents. It must be a pleasure among persons of the same mind as yourself, to lead a number of children along the right path, and to convince them by your own peace, that such is the road, and those the feelings by which to arrive at inward happiness, acceptance with others, and consideration in the world, which latter, if we pursue it in the world, we drive away rather than attain to. To few it happens, as to St. Hubert, that the quarry he chases turns round to him with the Cross between its horns! Most men are entangled among the thistles and thorns of sin, torn by their own dogs—their passions, or fall into the punishment of poachers, being led astray by false signals, or expire without deliverance in the abyss of vain desire. Hermitages in the desert of life are rarely to be met with now-a-days, and few indeed who go astray find a hermit ready to lead them to the right path for the love of Jesus. If even they should meet with a lonely individual from whom they could ask the road, they again incur the danger of finding, instead of one who lives apart from men for the love of God, some secluded oddity who will give

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them philosophical serpents instead of fish to eat.

"It is a beautiful work, to spin from the hearts of children an everlasting thread, which at their entrance into the labyrinth, is made fast to the Heart of Jesus, and after all their windings brings them back again to Him. Perhaps, also, we can find no truer care for the sick or the poor, than in rearing the gentle hearts of children. Each one has its own sickness; obstinacy is worse than scrofula, indolence and thievishness worse than rickets and cramp in the hands, lying and detraction worse than scurvy and a foul tongue. All these evils are only the same to the body as sins are to the soul, so that we can in no wise say, that he who suffers in body must be ill also in his soul, but only that sin and the inclination to sin are the most dangerous of all diseases. Besides at Marienberg, the service of the sick and poor is not forbidden, indeed I believe, if circumstances permitted, you would find more help among the pupils there than at Coblentz. Thank you for the doll's head from St. Charles. You certainly cannot have sewed the stuff without reflection, since by a late enquiry it was refused to you; but after all that does not signify, and will perhaps be advantageous for you and the Boppard children. I was glad to

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receive a letter from Apollonia, through Van der Meulen, who did not see you at Marienberg. She, who never complains, thinks with affection of Coblentz, with sorrow of little friend Nell, with longing of Pauline at the Ursulines. She says papa is cheerful, and paints and plays music. Nevertheless I know from others that she has little happiness; she has not a confidential person, she appears too stern, and frightens many off who think they cannot keep pace with her. You and Caroline, although all three so different, cannot be replaced to her. Write to her oftener, even if she does not answer; I know it does her good, but she never holds out inducement for it, because she always does what is against her own inclination.

"But stop, I have been watching you: probably before you expect, I shall knock at your door, to be once more with a being that really likes me. I hope you have not left the picture of St. Catherine of Sienna and the dress of Sister Emmerich at Coblentz? If you have done so, ask your mother to send them, which can be easily done, if some one on board the boat will observe that nothing touches the picture. I wish to know that these dear keepsakes, which have accompanied me for so many years on all my journeys, are in your immediate neighbourhood, and I should be sorry if I did not

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find it so on my arrival. I gave them to you, because it will be a comfort and a pleasure to you in lonely hours to look at that picture. Think of me kindly, perhaps I shall see you this week. Are you glad of it? I am with all my heart.

"CLEMENS BRENTANO."

Regarding the institution, he says in his published letters: "The instructresses of Boppard grow in simplicity and piety. They are firmly resolved to raise their institute to an ecclesiastical one." And after the death of the two, Sophie and Therese, "The country has lost much in them. They were more than day labourers. In them were found light, sun, dew, breezy freshness, colour, perfume, melody, wings, and 'ower the hills and far awa!'"

When we think of Gretchen, transplanted from her own domestic atmosphere to that of people such as these, she appears like a sick person long confined to the house, removed into a sunny garden. And, as if nothing should be wanting to lead her back to life, she and Sophie, the most remarkable of the sisters, formed a strong attachment to one another. So we can hardly imagine a happier situation for her, than this active life, based on God and the Church, and

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blessed with charity and prosperity; in such a district also, free as in the country, and yet united to family and friends by the all-connecting Rhine. The mistresses' relationship to Görres and Windischmann, as well as the aim proposed by the Institute, had obtained for it the sympathy of congenial minds, among whom were many distinguished men, so that there was no want of interesting visits. It is a strong proof how serious Gretchen was in her convent wishes, that even from here she made attempts to be received back again to St. Charles, of course only to suffer anew the pain of a refusal. But, however sensibly she might feel, and although it was her peculiarity never really to outlive any sorrow, she was still too elastic and too loving, not to be open to present impressions, and she was too sincere and constant to what she had undertaken, not to devote herself to it with energy. Her method with children, in which cheerfulness and kindness were mixed with gravity and firmness, exercised a great influence upon them, and as the service of the sick and poor was not excluded at Marienberg, but rather it was considered an important point in good Catholic education to give the pupils a taste and capacity for it, she found an open field for her favourite occupation. The

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happiness of her life was increased in no small degree by the neighbourhood of her family, for although somewhat out of place among them, she loved them none the less, and when she was far away from them, the delay of letters used to alarm her exceedingly. How easy it was for her now to go to Coblentz by the Rhine, or still bettter, to walk thither with the servant, by the Jacobsberg and Rense, by way of the Königsstuhl.

At home her daily duties led her seldom beyond the town and its fortifications. A walk with her mother as far as the "Markebildchen," a little chapel in the fields, and a family walk on Sundays, were about her only means of getting fresh air, unless often in the evening, when her heart was oppressed in the close room, she stole out to Moseleck to look down on the old Rhine that, always going, and yet always remaining, was so true a picture of her own life, for ever rushing on, and yet for ever chained behind. But these were few and fleeting moments. How different it was now, to wander through the lofty solitary forest, and from the height on which she stood to look up and down the stream, over the wide, rich country, intersected by the Rhine with all its sails, and boats, and rafts; and not in the hurry and surprise

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of a traveller, but with the tranquil feeling of home.

The child of the soil, so proud of her "proud Rhine," as she liked to call him, might well rejoice to feel that the sun which ripened the grapes upon those hills, had warmed her own blood, and that her spirit was akin to the dark bold rocks that proudly threw themselves forward to the stream. And though the old gray ruins may attract us with a strange and foreign charm, to her they were dear old friends, who in many a sorrowful hour had whispered to her the mournful consolation that all on earth was vain and passing away.

But then, again, from the towns and villages, and churches and chapels along the shores, there arose the well-known forms of the dear saints of that region, beloved from her childhood, and if they breathed the same moral as the old ruins, it was not with the former mournful tone of resignation, but in the Church's eternal song of triumph!

Such is the charm of those scenes, to one who looks at them as Gretchen did, far above all beauties of nature and romance, that in them, as in an open book, he can read portions of the life of his Church. However ignorant he may be, however dark the night of history may appear, still, like bright stars,

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the names and deeds of those will stand forth, who first planted the Cross here, watering the soil with their blood—who protected and sheltered that Cross, and collected the lives of men around its sign, till it became like an ivy-mantled tree.

To one pursuing these reflections, all true life and all real verdure and growth are included in the Life of the Church. The names of those separated from the Church, and the ruined and desecrated convents that testify of their power, lead him not astray, any more than the withered and fallen leaves of past years injure the strength of the tree, because he feels himself to be a branch of that Tree, and is sensible of its vital power in his veins. To him the little chapels, and the white stations winding up the hills to the little church at the top, are not mere ornaments of the landscape; they are the monuments of his inmost life. He has wandered to them alone and silent, or praying aloud and singing in the long processions of the pilgrims, and here and there upon his knees, he has poured forth his heart in sorrow and contrition, and in blessed prayer.

Following the downward course of the Rhine from Bingen, opposite Boppard, we find two ruins situated close together, and between them, at their feet, we see a large building, which shines forth in

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the blue shadows of morning, and sparkles in the last rays of the evening sun. It is the former Franciscan monastery of Bornhofen.* For Gretchen this ancient and celebrated pilgrimage was in every sense a place of grace. Thither she went in every sorrow, every doubt, every weariness of spirit, and she always returned comforted, strengthened, and refreshed. In her appended letters she often alludes to these excursions.

In order to make Gretchen's residence at Marienberg an entire portion of her life, many a dark page had to take its place beside the bright ones. These arose from the circumstances of the house; and the more untroubled her relations were with it, and the more she united herself heart and soul to the interests of the house, so much the more she was carried away by them. To follow her here, and to understand the wide-spread influence that her connection with Marienberg had over her, it is necessary for us to go a little more closely into the affair.

The establishment was spreading more and more. So many pupils came from far and near, that, besides the superiors and governesses, seven male teachers had been engaged, and yet it was far from being considered satisfactory. It has already been

* Now a convent of Redemptoristine Nuns.—*Translator.*

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mentioned in the words of Clemens Brentano, that the first desire of its owners was to make the institution an ecclesiastical one. But on account of the Order, placed by the regulation of the Prussian government then on the Rhine, the idea arose that there were insurmountable obstacles to having it so according to outward form, and in the meantime it appeared better to introduce quietly and unobserved what could not be done openly. The Sacré Cœur, a recent Order, whose foundress, Madame Barat, still lived in the mother house at Paris, passed for the model of a religious school, and to transplant its spirit, method, and manner to Marienberg seemed the step best adapted for arriving at the object in view. Sophie D. went herself to Paris, and she succeeded in inducing two ladies of the order to come to Marienberg in secular dress, and to begin to arrange the establishment. As the affair had to be kept very secret, the inhabitants of the house hardly knew any more of them than seeing them coming and going like shadows at the daily church service. But the police had found them out, and they were not there long before gens d'armes came to turn them out, a circumstance that occasioned great pain and annoyance, and as the superiors would not give up their intention, it brought all the disquietude of new plans. There

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were also two other causes which troubled Marienberg. First, that of money.

In order fully to understand this, we must first cast a glance at the circumstances of the family Doll. We need not be afraid of committing an indiscretion in so doing, for the Rhenish antiquarians describe these things far more circumstantially. The very ancient and aristocratic convent of Marienberg had been secularized at the end of the last century, and was acquired by the father of its present superior, a rich merchant, who made it into a weaving manufactory.

Experience showed here, as elsewhere, that no blessing rests on appropriated church property. After the peace, the manufactory fell so much into debt that the children of Doll's first marriage sacrificed their considerable property by the mother's side to hinder bankruptcy, which, however, threatened to return anew some years later, as their father would not give up his business, and hoped to retrieve his losses by expensive speculations. Then Sophie and Therese, daughters of his first marriage, resolved to found this school, which their own education well enabled them to undertake, and their earnest desire to give a religious character to the institution, seemed in some degree to atone for the misfortune of the alienated convent. Mean-

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while, although this spirit, so distinctive from others, caused the establishment to advance very rapidly; on the other hand, the question of money was more lost sight of than was advisable under its circumstances. The pension, already small, was partly diminished to some of the poorer pupils, and entirely remitted to others, while at the same time nothing was spared to the advantage of the house. And so it happened that at the death of the principal creditor the mortgage on Marienberg was suddenly called in, and their difficulties became greater than ever. They were grieved not only at the loss of the property they had so long possessed, but also at the failure of all their good and charitable intentions. In this distress they began a forty days' prayer to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in union with many of their friends, and with some French convents at Metz and Strasburg. In the middle of the trial there came the sudden news of the arrival of a party sent by the Prussian government to treat for the purchase of Marienberg, to make it a lunatic asylum. The offer seemed very advantageous, but Doll could not make up his mind immediately to accept it, because the Baron von Fürstenberg, who took an interest in the preservation of the school, had shown himself willing to lend money for its assistance. Only it

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was not easy to communicate with him quickly, as he had gone upon a journey, and as the messenger from government returned with the ultimatum that the purchase must be immediately concluded or all negotiations stopped; and they were also given to understand that Fürstenberg, before he would lend the money, intended to have the property inspected in the following spring. The owner thought it folly to refuse the offer on such an uncertain chance of help, and therefore on the evening before the last day's grace, he wrote his consent to government. That day was also the last of the devotion.

The daughters begged their father, who knew nothing of the prayers, not to post the letter till the following morning, which he agreed to; but when that also passed, and the letter had to be in the post by mid-day, every hope seemed gone. Then suddenly the sound of a post-horn broke in upon their sorrow. A carriage stopped in the street—a man got out and entered the house—it was Fürstenburg. Without having the least idea how opportune his visit was, it occurred to him, as his road lay near Marienberg, to go and look at the property himself. He was satisfied with it—in a few hours all was settled; even the letter to government, which by a happy chance had not been

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forwarded, was got back again. We can imagine how the faith and confidence of all who knew about it, was increased by this wonderful help, and how much Gretchen, who in their immediate neighbourhood had feared, prayed, hoped and sorrowed with them, was affected by it.

Another power, however, which could not be bought off with money, and would not yield to Gretchen's influence, pursued Sophie, the soul of the establishment.

Some years before Gretchen's arrival at Marienberg, during a night in Advent time, when the so-called *Rorate* Mass begins every morning at five, Sophie, who had the keys of the house beside her bed, that she might go in and out without disturbing any one, rose and went to church at Boppard, as she had often done before on dark December mornings. She went through the silent streets to the lofty old church, but finding the door locked, and thinking she had come a little too early, she knelt down to wait before a cross in front of the church door. Meanwhile, the clock in the tower struck one, two, three, four, five—and already she was congratulating herself on the right hour having come, when it went on, and struck midnight. Scarcely had the last stroke sounded, when she heard a quick hurried step behind her, like some one walk-

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ing in wooden shoes, and it stood still beside her. She looked up, and saw a white ghostly figure at her side, in the dress of the former nuns of Marienberg. Terrified, and as if the church would give her shelter, she rushed to the door, but while she violently pulled at the lock, she saw the ghost cowering in a niche of the porch. Then she fled back along the street, from one house door to another, in hopes one would open, but always when she tried to catch the handle, the figure stood before her. Half senseless, she ran home up the hill, and saw it again standing on the top of the court wall. How she got into the house, into her room and to bed, she herself did not know.

Next morning, when her sister, shocked at her scared appearance, asked what had happened to her, she was calm enough to say with a smile, "I have been fighting with ghosts in the night, nothing more."

It was but natural that little notice would be taken of such a thing in a school, but that first visitation was not the last. Details, into which we need not enter, gave reason to believe that Sophie had entered into a sort of communication with the apparition, although she was silent about it herself. But whatever might be thought of it, one thing is certain, that from that time her health really

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declined, and a headache which the doctors could not explain troubled her continually.

It has already been remarked, that in spite of the first disappointment, they had not given up the plan of bringing the Sacré Cœur to Marienberg. Only the manner of doing so had to be changed. The most advisable course appeared to be, that they should send some one to the Mother House of the Order at Paris, who, on the spot itself, could imbibe its religious spirit, and at the same time learn the method of its educational system, so as to introduce it at Marienberg. No one seemed more fitted for this duty than Gretchen, and we can well believe that with her disposition to love what was out of the common, she was willing to do it, though not without timidity. Her parents were not opposed to her qualifying herself there further for her profession of teacher; and so she travelled to Paris in the spring of 1830, in the company of a young girl, Marie G., who intended to enter the Order. Shortly before leaving, she received the following letter from Clemens Brentano:

"Well-meaning child! I had just written Appel a welcome to Coblentz, and said: 'How glad Gretchen will be that you are coming,' when I was interrupted by a letter from Gretchen, who says:

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'I am going away, and the day is fixed, what do you think of it?' What in all the world can my opinion signify about a matter already settled? I only know this much, wherever you go, no one will be deceived in you, and whosoever you leave will miss you. One thing I beg of you not to encourage too often, and above all not to put upon me, namely the opinion, that all difficulties from the side of parents, respecting an usual step on the part of their daughter, come from the enemy of souls. I believe Appel never thought so in all her life, and yet she has been obedient, and patient, and useful to many. Such obstacles are mostly trials sent from God, in order to prevent persons from embracing the religious state without vocation. I do not know the parents of Marie G., but I must admire them, for giving their consent to a step, which I do not blame, but which must seem strange to the feelings of a parent.

" You are going to a good and pious place, that is the best. You will learn much in customs, deportment, dignity, manner, &c., which does no harm, if it is not too unhomely. You yourself stand in no need of such, in my opinion. You would be the better of greater confidence, and less shyness. How far you may succeed in acquiring a certain extent of knowledge as a teacher, I cannot

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decide. For your religious comfort you will have a splendid and solemn service, full of elegance and dignity, and of great edification: do not let your devotion be spoiled by it, so that you may not be disturbed by finding too much difference at home if you return. You will make the acquaintance of some talented and pious ladies, who after a life of experience have consecrated themselves to God. It is to be hoped they will soon allow you to approach them, and not leave you to pine away amongst all their occupations in the central point of their Order, and their widely-spread good intentions.

"I hope you have formed your resolution in accordance with the wishes of Sophie, and then you will surely return to German land, if it does not happen to you as to Louisa. Unless indeed, she were to come back with you. It is true, souls are everywhere, and native land is nothing before God; yet we still owe a share of the grace He gives us to the spot where He caused us to be born, unless it rejects it. So then I hope you will not forget your country, and the excellent Herr Dietz, and our good Appel. God grant that you may learn something worth while, and be able to assist the Boppard ladies when you come back, or whatever else our Lord may ordain. You see I am not

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enthusiastic for this step, and also not against it. It makes me grave, because I feel that I myself have to lose by it, for you and Appel are as dear to me as my own children could have been. But since your own parents wish it, I must console myself, and wish you happiness and blessing. You will see it is somewhat hard for me, but that does not signify, and I will have no other feeling about it than that of Herr D. and Appel. I wish the house at Boppard all prosperity, and all possible development in good, and therefore I wish it the greatest punctuality in the smallest things, and in the actions of each moment of the day. I pass no judgment on the probability of success for some of good Sophie's hopes; we are allowed to pray for what is good; God will grant it if it is necessary—He will know. Yet I am in no way inclined to believe, that it is safe to trouble ourselves about cakes and tarts, when we are not forbidden to bake wholesome wheaten bread, especially if thereby we incur the danger of losing the whole baking establishment. I have always had an extreme dislike of all smuggling, unless indeed it concerned the word of God and the Holy Sacraments, as in the time of the Revolution, when they were forbidden. I understand that it is considered the greatest advantage for a house to educate in

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French fashion, and that this is to be sought after by every means; but it is enough for me that education should be solid, sensible, and Catholic, and my fear is, that through so much sending to and fro to Paris, the institution may excite observation, and some day receive a sudden blow. In our times political meanings are seen in everything, and if I were asked, on my conscience, if the Sacré Cœur Institute in Paris were quite free from political tendencies, I should be obliged to say: they are in the very highest degree royalistic and ultramontane, and have only Jesuits for their directors; there may be no politics in that before God, but there seems much in it before men, if this view is not worked out from the truth in one's own heart, but fetched from elsewhere, where it may be turned to a certain temporal significance. If a person eats oranges purely from taste, it is quite unimportant, but if he fetches them from the court gardener of the Prince of Orange, while he has them growing at home in his own garden, it would certainly excite observation, because oranges are the distinctive party sign of the Prince of Orange. I do not know whether or not you understand me, I will only say: May God bless and preserve the Boppard institution, and nourish it out of its own intrinsic merits, and let it not be complicated with

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any unfortunate fate. That concerns you no further: you go honestly and piously to Paris, and learn what you require to know, when you have the opportunity, and come back again in all simplicity. I do not know in what you require drilling, but if you can learn to write a good hand, do it, it will be for your advantage. Remain, for God's sake, in your heart's simplicity, and do not lose your—'Oh go along!' Look at Appel, let her be your model: among all feminine characters that I have seen, she is the most simple, the most natural, honest, undesigning and useful creature that I know. I like much the ladies of the Sacré Cœur, but none of them has forced from me such esteem as Appel, indeed, I never knew any with more sense, and yet I have been acquainted with the *élite* of the whole Order. But that is because Appel grew up, as it were, under the hand of God, but these ladies are penetrated with many various influences. I send this letter to D.—it might perhaps vex Sophie, which I would not wish. Her enthusiasm and her confidence are very admirable, but in this respect so active, that I should not like to encounter them in any way, either to further or to hinder her. God must give the increase! Only one thing we have the strongest right to demand, viz., that in the existing institution every thing

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must be taught in a solid manner. If that is attended to, all else is their own affair. That you feel half uneasy at going to Paris, denotes nothing, either of good or evil influence. It is the usual confusion of a shy child, when it has to leave its little room to go into a large party, of which it has heard all kinds of tales. The seven wonders which the world you are entering will have to talk about, before you and behind you, will be sooner learnt by you than a recruit would know his exercises. You and Appel are excellent homespun linen—there you will learn how beautiful manufactory linen is made and got up. The thread is not always stronger thereby, but it is good to learn everything, when one is going into the linen trade, and wishes to compete with others, and even bear away the prize. I consider many of the ladies of the Sacré Cœur very pious, agreeable and intellectual persons, without my being able on that account to make an estimate of their skill in education. I think their novices are better than their pupils. Enough of that now. If I can, I shall see you before you go, for it is a great pleasure to me to think it would give you pleasure. My book on the Hospital, the last sheet of which is now in the press, keeps me still occupied, and then, what perhaps you would not believe, I have a certain

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shyness of Coblentz, as you have of Paris, but notwithstanding, I shall probably come. Till then, dear child, remember me in prayer. Will you not leave your St. Catherine with Appel till you come back again?

"Remember me to your parents, and to all friends.

"CLEMENS BRENTANO."

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CHAPTER V.

THE SACRE CŒUR.

IT was at that time no small undertaking for two young girls to travel so far into a foreign country in a diligence, but the object of their journey raised them above all other considerations. On arriving in Paris their anxious expectation allowed them to look at nothing, right or left For them Paris contained nothing but the Sacré Cœur, and with beating hearts they drove through the long tortuous streets and wide squares, to the Rue de Varenne, where the carriage stopped before a stately iron-railed gate, behind which arose a large building, more like a palace than a convent: a spectacle which was not calculated to overcome the bashfulness of the newly-arrived. But in the house it soon gave way before the kindliness with which they were received; and the impression made upon them by those to whom they were

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especially recommended. Madame Barat, the Foundress and Superioress-general of the Order, enchanted them by the motherly kindness with which she knew how to win the hearts of youth; and Gretchen was even more attracted by the mistress of novices, who was intellectual, of penetrating understanding, and great amiability, and exercised an unlimited empire over the young minds.

It was a remarkable fate, which within two years had led Gretchen to the two poles of the religious life: the old humble St. Charles, and the brilliant Sacré Cœur, yet soaring in its first flight.

As it were amid the evening shadows, at the exit of life, stands the one—a refuge of the poor, the weary, the sick, and the dying, and according to its purpose, it demands nothing from its members but charity and capacity for their heavy but simple service. Whatever the novice may have of rank, education, talents, or intellectual requirements, she lays them all down along with her name before the altar, never to use them again; and as the order is principally recruited from the lower classes, she will do well never to remember them, so that the spiritual atmosphere which the others bring with them, may not be uncomfortable to her.

This sinking of personality was once well expressed by a sister, for whose recovery from dan-

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gerous sickness good wishes were offered to the house, and who replied: "What does it matter if one of us dies? we are like panes of glass, if one breaks, the glazier puts another in, and nobody thinks more about it!"

It is otherwise in the Sacré Cœur. If St. Charles stands at the exit, this stands at the entrance into life! and if there, as if in evening shadows, individuals are blended together into masses, so here, as in the bright morning light, each one stands forth sharp and distinct. As an educational institute for the upper classes, and as an Order pursuing wide and world-embracing objects, personalities must here be taken into the scale quite otherwise than there. Down to their very name nothing is taken from the novices—but their own will! High rank is welcome; every talent, every gift, is drawn out and cultivated; but also the most apparently insignificant little stone finds its place in the magnificent mosaic of the Order.

Although Gretchen brought with her neither advantages of birth nor conspicuous talents, it did not escape the penetration of the mistress of novices that she well made up for these wants by good sense, strength of character, and generosity.

Scarcely were the two girls settled according to

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their desire, Gretchen in the boarding school, and Marie G. in the noviciate, when the mistress of novices announced to them that they must change places. Not only was this unfavourable to the real object of their coming, but Gretchen felt herself aggrieved at the inroad on her personal freedom, and fearlessly she declared that for such a step she had neither the permission of her parents nor her own inclination. However, while thus trying to maintain her independence against this power, otherwise so imposing to her, she made no change in the mind of the mistress, who, perhaps, liked the little German all the better for her courageous resistance, and Gretchen saw that if she did not wish to fail altogether in her mission, nothing remained for her but to yield: a conclusion that was of incomparably greater importance to her than to Marie G., who could easier pass from the school into the Order, than she could return from the noviciate to the world. For, although entry into the noviciate does not make a novice, it is still always the first step towards becoming one, and she shuddered at the thought that she might here meet with a similar fate as at St. Charles, with this difference, that here she would be forced to do herself what there she had been obliged to submit to.

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Yet, however dispirited she was at her entry to the noviciate, she was every day more attracted by the spirit she there encountered. Clemens Brentano—who, amid the rush of his own soul, easily failed to catch the tones in the minds of others, especially when they sounded so low as in Gretchen,—had probably thought her more simple and girlish than she really was. At her twenty-two years of age, and inexperienced in the world's ways, she might well let alone his hints about the Order's political importance, all the more, that to her straightforward mind, despising worldly wisdom, it seemed impossible that the service of the church, as she here found it, could not have hands as unspotted from the world and its works as it required; and it was as little the "elegant dignity" of the religious service which enchained her, as it was the kindness of the "intellectual ladies" that bewitched her. The point of attraction for her lay deeper. As far as is practicable for women, the Sacré Cœur has a similar rule to that of the Jesuits, and works in the same spirit. This enterprising, active spirit, as in her simplicity she understood it, accorded with her own; and for her soul, burning with love and enthusiasm for her church, an Order which developed the highest activity for it, and placed the universality of that church so vividly

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before her eyes, was to her overpowering. Here she saw around her, from princely rank down to the lowest condition, French, English, Spaniards, Irish, Italians, Poles, and Russians, all gathered together for one object, which was also for her the highest of all. She saw with what facility, as if they were going from one house to another, to-day one, to-morrow another member of the Order was sent to the most distant lands, or came back from thence,—and, carried away as much by the generosity with which all these journeys were undertaken, as by the high-handed firmness with which they were directed, she easily believed what the Order says of itself, that it is appointed to renew the face of the earth. And lastly, how gratified her self-love must have been, to think that *she*, the insignificant girl, poor in talents and in knowledge, had been found worthy and fit to take part in this exalted company. She saw herself here at the height of *the* life, which alone appeared to her worthy of existence, life raised for the Church: what wonder, if, looking down from this height, all the surrounding world sank away, and to her mind, aspiring after the great and extraordinary, her own circumstances, Marienberg, and all that she loved, appeared as things which she, having put her hand to the plough, dared not look back upon, and all

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the less so, the more her human feelings drew her back. The word of the Lord: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me," raised her over all—her own sacrifice, and those that others would have to make. Every rising uneasiness regarding others was also silenced by the thought that God, who had so wonderfully guided her own heart, would also direct those of her parents, and so their consent would follow for the step, to take which she now no longer resisted.

On the 24th July, while the choir was singing the Magnificat, the white veil was cast over her brow. It was the happiest day of her life, the fulfilment of her earliest and most ardent wishes, denied to her at St. Charles. She thought herself in the fore-court of heaven, and dreamed not that in a few days others around her would tremble at fear of battle, and the thunder of artillery. From the interior life of the noviciate nothing was known of what went on outside, and the ladies of the Sacré Cœur, who at the beginning, never doubted of the victory of the Government, considered it best to calm the young minds by saying that great military manœuvres were going on in the streets. In the school however, where every hour pupils were being fetched away by parents and relatives, the truth could not

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remain concealed, and Marie G., who already had several times tried to whisper something to Gretchen, as she passed her, stuffed a slip of paper into her hand, which Gretchen, remembering the rule to receive no secret messages or letters, returned to her displeased, without reading it. Meantime the noise came nearer and nearer—fugitive Swiss soldiers climbed from the Boulevard des Invalides over the wall into the convent garden, where one of them sank dying before the eyes of the terrified girls. The king's cause was lost, and the fate of convents during the first Revolution, and especially the probable fate of their own, so nearly allied to the court, presented itself in all its horrors to the minds of the ladies of the Order.

Flight appeared the wisest course, and before Gretchen and her companions knew what had actually happened, they were put late that same evening into close carriages, and driven out of the town by trustworthy persons. It was hardly dawn, when passing through a village, the carriage in which Gretchen sat was stopped, and torn open with wild shrieks of "le roi, le roi!" and the terrified faces of the poor girls were examined with lighted candles. Fortunately they allowed them to go on uninjured, amid ridicule and laughter at the mistake. And now that Charles X. was sought for among them,

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Gretchen for the first time knew what she had passed through.

Later, when the July Revolution and its dark deeds came to be mentioned in her and Brentano's presence, he used to tease Gretchen, who never liked to speak of her experiences, and least of all of those in Paris, by saying: "Here, this lady, Gretchen Verflassen, went through the whole Revolution in Paris, she was herself taken for Charles X, she can give you the most exact description of every thing."

Her journey was to M., to a house of the Sacré Cœur, in communication with Marienberg, where a friend of Gretchen's, whom she had known from childhood, L. M., from Coblentz, lived as a lady of the Order. Here Gretchen learned that the Paris house was entirely broken up, and that Madame Barat, with a large number of the ladies had fled to Savoy.

This departure for M. had on Gretchen an unexpected effect. The shock by which she had been thrown out of her previous condition, and the dissolution of the Paris house were of a sobering tendency, and the spiritual direction which surrounded her here was yet more so. For here was again shown, that the most comprehensive, and the minutest rule is not able to give the spirit, and that

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all at last depends on the persons who handle it. What to Gretchen in the Mother House of the Order had appeared so masculine, grand and comprehensive, dwindled down in its child to feminine, small, and pedantic.

The remark may be heard in the Sacré Cœur, that among novices of all nations, the Germans find it most difficult to renounce their own will,—and this experience and its awkward application may account for the treatment which Gretchen endured for an apparently insignificant cause. In the boarding-school, lottery-tickets were offered for the benefit of a poor family. Gretchen had taken some tickets and won a shawl, which she immediately gave away again. In doing so, she had certainly forgotten that novices possess nothing of their own, and therefore can give nothing away; a transgression which, under the circumstances, would have brought her in Paris an admonition, but hardly a reprimand, whereas here the consequence was, that in the presence of the whole community sitting at table, ladies, novices, and some priests who were guests, her dinner was served to her on the floor.

It would be going too far, however, to suppose that by what she endured here, her whole impression of the Order as she received it in Paris, was overclouded. She was discerning enough not to be

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led astray by mistakes of that nature, but still the result of present circumstances was, that her own family and her self-imposed duties, which had been driven out of her mind by the strength of her Paris impressions, now again awoke in her memory and her conscience.

Her parents, suspecting nothing of her noviciate, were writing happy letters about her fortunate escape from the dangers of the Revolution, and they so vividly and urgently expressed their wish that their child might soon come back from that unquiet, graceless land, that they deprived Gretchen of courage to tell them the truth. For she saw, that if she remained, she would be acting in direct opposition to the wishes of her parents, which she certainly never intended to do, and which would also have been contrary to the intention of the Order, which, as a general rule, requires the consent of parents. In fact, however, the consent of Gretchen's parents to her entering the Sacré Cœur, would have been quite a different thing than with regard to St. Charles. The latter Order was from their nearest neighbourhood, beloved and homely, they saw its charitable works, and might hope to have Gretchen back again near them; whereas the Sacré Cœur, in space as in spirit, lay entirely out of their range of vision.

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That it had been driven out by gens-d'armes, at its first concealed attempt to take root in German soil, was not calculated to make them more favourable to it. The confidence that had carried Gretchen over all difficulties had left her, and instead of now expecting a miracle on the hearts of her parents, sober reality in its well-known form came before her. What she had represented to the mistress of novices a few months before, was to her now as clear as ever, only she herself did not stand as the same person in front of these truths. What she had at first so energetically refused, then half unwillingly submitted to, had afterwards received the seal of her own will by her reception of the veil. And this veil, which she had regarded as the highest object of her ambition, which she had with such enchantment felt to fall upon her brow, was she herself to take it off her head? What a serious act was not that for her own inmost being, and also for her position altogether! For if it already seems to cast an unfavourable light on any one, in an important affair, to take a backward step, how much more must that be the case with one who must question the whole seriousness, the whole truth of her spiritual aim, and must question it of them from whose hands she received the veil, those to

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whom she clung with unchangeable love and veneration!

And lastly, was she not obliged to mistrust herself, whether or not the going was really her own wish? And if it were not so, if she should retain the firm conviction that she had here found her vocation, and not been led by self-deception and enthusiasm, what a fearful step it then would be, to go out! To which ever side the balance of her feelings turned, every way she must be pressed down to the ground.

In this inward conflict the summer and autumn passed away, when one day Herr M. arrived to see his daughter, and brought to Gretchen the distinct command of her parents to return with him. No escape was now possible, for if she had found means to evade it, they would have been on the spot refuted by Herr M., who would not have concealed the fact of her being a clothed novice.

In such dark and oppressed moments, where inclination fought against inclination, and duty against duty, for the reception of the veil gave,—(since a novice can still go out in the first year) no formal, but still a moral obligation—where every thing, thought over a thousand times, only turns round the quicker and more perplexing in the circle of reflection—every new idea, even though unim-

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portant in itself, can bring about a decision. It was as if nothing of all that had power over her, should be wanting in this most serious moment of her life, which decided her whole future; and so her oldest friends, the poor, came to take their part in her battle. Once, at Coblentz, she had nursed a poor woman during a long illness, and the latter, shortly before her death, declared she could not die in peace unless Gretchen promised to take care of the children she left behind her. Gretchen, with the dying woman before her, had given this promise, and, as far as the moment permitted, she had fulfilled it. Whether she were now reminded of this by Herr M., or how else the thing occurred to her, it was enough; this, in itself so elastic a promise, obtained now such a stretch and meaning in her eyes, that she thought she would be guilty of perfidy to a dying person, if she were not to undertake that charge for the future. No matter though others might regard it as a proof of her desire to go away, unknown to herself, that this promise which to its entire extent she was not yet in a position to fulfil, appeared to her now of so much consequence. Her later life, especially devoted to the poor, lets it appear as a particular direction of Providence, that it should be the poor who drew her back to the world, for in truth this

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circumstance turned the scale. Yet in the night before the departure of Herr M., she walked up and down the room with his daughter, who strongly urged her to remain, in the severest inward struggle, till the morning dawned. Then, however, she had made up her mind, and stepped into the travelling carriage.

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CHAPTER VI.

HER RETURN HOME.

SHE had done what she thought it necessary to do, and we have no reason to suppose that she ever regretted her departure. Thus she says, in one of her later letters, respecting her convent attempts: "God's ways were always different from mine; even when I thought to do the best, it was a dream." But it is clear that she now returned with all the more burning a wound than she had brought from St. Charles, inasmuch as now she had inflicted it upon herself, and also, because with her exit from the Sacré Cœur, the whole convent world, the golden dream of her youth, faded away behind her. And yet her intentions had been so earnest, so faithful and true, as in every thing she undertook, and she was still unshaken in her conviction that in that life her true place was to be found; yet from one house she

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was a dismissed postulant, from the other a novice who had left of her own accord! What a position even for her pride! And if a light spirit, suffering under the failure of its most serious endeavours, becomes thereby all the lighter, how must the reverse of this have been the case with Gretchen's disposition, already inclined to gloom! Might she not, in her despondency, believe that things had only gone wrong and failed, because she was mixed up with them? Strong and faithful to duty, willing and able to give her hand where necessity seemed to require it, she did not let herself be stopped in her daily duties, but in secret she suffered severely from the conflict of extreme energy and discouragement.

In truth, one who did not know that God is the Guider of souls, and that the end of all the paths in this world is to lead us to the next, might well ask why this soul was turned aside from the way on which nature and conviction, gifts and talents, impelled her, the path by which these gifts could unfold in the holy ordinances of her church, peacefully and quietly within the convent walls, instead of leading a broken, restless, suffering existence in the world, apparently consisting of nothing but beginnings? Of course, to such a question the answer may suffice that God has the right over

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all His ways; but whoever might have observed Gretchen's mind and life deeper than on the surface, would also understand that, however dark and entangled, and often ending in precipices, her path might appear—though her garments were torn by its thorns, and her feet were bleeding from its stones—yet, from far above, where solitary, quiet, and lonely, it disappears at the top of a little hill; there shone a light, gilding its shadows, clearing up its tangled breaks till they became distinct figures, and showing that its precipices are abysses of eternal love, which He Himself, the Highest Superior, was ordaining for this novice of the Kingdom of Heaven. To Him, who willeth not sacrifice nor burnt offering, it is not sufficient that man should render back the gifts received from Him, completed according to man's own particular judgment, even in the most sacred ordinances of life,—as the goldsmith, regardless of the worthless setting, breaks out the precious stone from its centre, so God breaks out from the richest dowry of nature, the only thing that He seeks in man, the rebellious and suffering heart, however much *we* may be disposed to give Him the rest instead of it.

How conscious Gretchen herself was of this universal fault, is proved by a fragment of a letter written many years later. "Meantime, I entered

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upon a very grave meditation. I joined myself in spirit to the Disciples at Jerusalem, when they grieved for the departure of their Lord, and I could well feel their grief, for I also had long lost His sensible presence. We were awaiting His coming, but unfortunately my unbearable twin-sister, vanity, longed also, not so much for the Lord Himself, as for His special distinction and recognition of heroic sacrifices, despising of the world, &c. Meanwhile the Lord arrived, bringing peace to the humble, but for me no distinction, but a reproof for my vanity, and still more for my divided heart, still bound to creatures, and I thought to hear the words: 'I know thee not, in thy heart there is no room for Me.' These words reminded me of the cock-crow of St. Peter, and I went out to weep with him."

She had more part than anyone else in the combat she here refers to with love of the creature, for to her applies what some one has said of the character of love: "Where love is, the heart is given to the service of the beloved, with all its most precious gifts, of feeling, of kindness, of benevolence, of joyous gladness and earnest sorrow; and with the heart go the good counsel of the head, and the faithful work of the hand, in the same service, and the feet run for the brother, and no one says of his goods, 'they are my own,' but

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every thing is in common." If we could ask those who were beloved by Gretchen whether it were not so in her case, they would answer with a joyful "yes," for it occurs in her every feature. In the simple aim of her life, her undivided character, even her extensive grasp of things, it never occurred to her that love could be otherwise than thus. Were we to enquire further, if her love had ever met its equal, the answer must be "No," however much, in the ordinary sense, she may have been extraordinarily beloved.

Between this "yes" and "no" lies the origin of her most painful sorrows, and also that of her hardest struggle, because these sufferings convinced her most impressively of her attachment to the creature. She might well say, in the bitterness of her feelings: "I would rather go out of the world than seek for love, for it is a scorpion sting, requiring art that I do not possess, and never wish to possess." Or, in despair at all love, even her own, which appeared to her as selfishness, she would cry: "Away with all love, it is not worth a farthing!" till at last, when her restless heart found rest in the faithfulness of God, she, praising her happiness, exclaims: "Now no friend can betray me any more!" For the Lord, who had chosen this heart for an abode for Himself, willed not that its in-

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dwelling germs should fade in the narrow bounds and uniformity of the cloister. He let it unfold itself in love and sorrow, in taking and refusing, in community and solitude, in good and evil report, and in all the combats which by nature it was exposed to, till it dropped, as an early-ripened fruit, into the Hand of the Heavenly Gardener.

As a supplement to her connection with the Sacré Cœur, we may mention that in it she was not forgotten. During her subsequent journey to Nice, when at Lyons, she sought for a lodging in a convent, as was her custom. In this way she found, without knowing it, a house of the Sacré Cœur. As she entered the door, the first person she saw was her old Novice-mistress from Paris. She could hardly contain herself; and the other, who recognized Gretchen immediately, was also moved, the more so as she supposed she had come to remain. But when she understood the reason of her appearance, there was no change in the kindness of the Novice-mistress; and when Gretchen took leave of her, after a long and affecting conversation, it was with the assurance, that whenever and however she might return to them again, she should always be received with open arms. Madame Barat said the same, many years later, to Frau von Z., with the addition: "if she were to bring nothing with her

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but the clothes on her back, I would take her back with pleasure."

At Marienberg, to which Gretchen returned, to fill her former situation, she found, as Clemens Brentano expressed it, the banner of the Cross set up. In vivid contrast to the strict, well-regulated interior of the convent, she was here drawn into most complicated worldly affairs. The evils that had preyed upon Marienberg since its commencement, had reappeared during her absence with the worst effects. The former wonderful assistance had only delayed the threatened downfall of the institution, but it could not prevent it. Owing to the great interest the owners had in its preservation, there was no lack of effort to prop up its tottering condition, and one of their warmest friends was so concerned about it, that, in order to ward off evil influences, he had for a time taken up his abode at Marienberg.

Whether it was that this gentleman did not always make the preponderance he had in the house to be felt in the most agreeable manner, or whether it was that she had a personal aversion to him, Gretchen could put no trust in him, and would have required the greatest, to endure his intercourse with Sophie. As before mentioned, Sophie's health had become most seriously undermined by her unfortunate

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intercourse with the spiritual world. Although these communications had now ceased,—for as Sophie's sister once finding her very much agitated and exhausted, asked her if she had again had dealings with the fearful nun, Sophie answered in the affirmative, but added that it was to be the last time; yet the deliverance from what was principally the cause of her illness seemed to have come too late, for all that the doctors could do to restore her health was in vain.

Then the above-named friend of the family, who was passionately devoted to magnetism, had induced her to subject herself to his treatment, which filled Gretchen with fear and anger, since she considered magnetism to be a mystery of nature in which the devil had more share than the angel. As she did not conceal her sentiments, the magnetiser thought it advisable to separate her from Sophie, in which he had no difficulty, owing to the power such treatment gives the operator over his patient, and he thus added a very deep mortification to Gretchen's distress about Sophie. But God delivered her from these painful circumstances by another.

She became ill, and her parents came to take her home. As she came tottering to meet them, they hardly recognised their child, she was so altered during the time she had been there. Her genera

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weakness was accompanied by a serious disease of the eyes, which Gretchen secretly attributed to her having had her hair cut off at her clothing in Paris—and for months she was obliged to sit in a darkened room.

During this melancholy time, so adapted to sorrowful reflections on the past, Clemens Brentano, who had returned to live at Coblentz, sought in every possible way to cheer her. He came every day: if he was not in the humour for talking, he went to the window, took out a book, let a little ray of light fall upon it, and read aloud to her as long as she liked. He also brought a guitar, and sang and played, and he never grudged the trouble to teach her the chords to her favourite songs, which she sang with her deep soft voice. But not only did he seek to amuse her. When the doctor, in trying to save her eyes, employed remedies which affected her whole constitution, Clemens said, "Oh, let the windows go, and save the house." And he sent for a homœopathic doctor from a distance on purpose for her, who succeeded in restoring her to health. Yet from that time she always had a tendency to amaurosis, which she had to contend with all her life. She only went from time to time to Marienberg, to give occasional help. Her parents hesi-

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tated to allow her, so recently recovered, to go back to a place where she had been so ill, and she did not wish it herself.

She lived now principally with her parents, visited the poor and the sick, assisted in the hospital, and was much in the Dietz's house, the centre of spiritual and religious life at Coblentz. Though her time appears thus well filled up, yet she afterwards remembered that period as one in which her "life was dead, people had become strangers to her, and she to them, and, amidst all exterior intercourse, a wall of ice remained between the hearts."

Her life might well seem dead, since it was broken in its strongest growth. Broken in its spiritual aim, for its natural outlet, the cloister, was denied it, and desolate and impoverished in human ties, by her altered connection with Sophie and her own position. Serious inward trials cause souls to retire within themselves, and the distinctive character which every unusual fate brings with it, contributed to estrange her from others. Her first failure in a convent was an unusual fate, and still more must her second appear so, owing to the half-concealed and doubtful light which fell upon it. Her silence on the subject was as much the effect of her own character as of the thing itself. Calm and still she let the consequences of her dream

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pass over her, but that all tended to make her draw the garment of exterior deportment tighter and stiffer about her, and so the "wall of ice" was formed.

But already shone the ray that was to melt the ice, and to cause the withered field to grow fresh and green again, with the awaking spring sun already on the horizon.

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CHAPTER VII.

ST. ANNE'S.

FOR the third time in the space of three years, the spring brought a change in Gretchen's fortunes. In the spring of 1828 she had gone to St. Charles; in that of 1830 to Paris, and in the spring of 1832 occurs her first connection with Westphalia. Count B. A. of H—burg, had the intention of founding an orphan institution in a building which had once been a convent of St. Anne, founded by his family, and which he had bought back, after the government had suppressed the convent. His sister-in-law, the Canoness Paula von H. had undertaken to carry out his plans. But before beginning, she travelled to Coblentz, to see the institutions there, and if possible to provide herself with a companion. Herr Dietz, to whom she explained her views, named Gretchen to her, and added: "Yes, if you can get her, you could never find a better." Before

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Paula had found an opportunity to take further steps about it, she met in the long passage of the Hospital, a small figure, neatly dressed in black, in whom, partly by presentiment, and partly by description, she recognised the person she was in search of. It was not difficult for her to overcome Gretchen's reserve, the less so, as the latter soon saw that they both stood on equal ground, both had the same aim, and both pursued it by the same road of active charity. Gretchen entered into Paula's proposals with her whole soul. She was only in doubt as to the consent of her parents, but Paula's personal influence had such effect upon them, that they considered her proposal a vocation to Gretchen, and gave their consent, under the condition that their child was to visit them every year.

With pleasure I introduce here Paula's own words: "In August this loving and faithful soul followed me to St. Anne's, where she laboured with infinite benediction, and was truly a sister, a friend to me. All that was done there of good, was through her." The effect of Paula's acquaintance and the prospect of the new life opening before her, is expressed by Gretchen in a letter, which she wrote to Paula the day after she left: "I can say our Lord has allowed me this whole day, and late into the night, to taste such overwhelming

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delight, as I, fed upon my dry hay and straw, have not tasted for a very long time. I should have liked to go out upon the house-tops, to tell of His love, of His sweet mysteries, of His gracious consolation; to breathe the air, and to invite the whole world to rejoice with me. I do not know how such life, such sunshine of love is poured out in my soul.

"Truly man is too weak for the love of the Saviour, and can hardly bear it." She even rejoiced at the pain of farewell, as "something that she could connect with the happiness she enjoyed;" and as much from thankfulness to God, as to recollect herself from the "distractions of the happy days," the same evening she began an introduction to a devotion for the following day. Before the morning arrived, she had to make serious arrangements for the nursing of her little niece, who had been taken suddenly ill, which she thinks, "may, after all, do no harm." To Paula's fear that she might picture to herself the life at St. Anne's too ideal, that is to say, too conventual, she answered later: "You are afraid that I dream of golden hills! Yes, there was once a time, and God knows it, when at night I used to dream of such wonderful bliss, that I would not heed the contradiction of reality, and scorning it, I lived on those

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dreams all the day through. But that time has long since given place to another."

The day of departure drew near, and her mother did not omit to provide Gretchen again with a very complete outfit. The trunk she had left behind, at her hasty journey from Paris, had at last arrived, but if they were surprised at its light weight, they wondered still more at its contents. Instead of Gretchen's good linen and substantial clothing, there was nothing in it, as her mother said, but "a bundle of rags," in the middle of which, a canary-yellow spencer, which Gretchen recognised as the property of a young Spaniard, looked disdainfully forth.

Once again she visited Marienberg, where she took a hopeless farewell of Sophie, and, as if she was not to take with her to her new home a thread which throbbed so painfully in her heart, before arriving there, she heard of her death.

Whatever feelings she may have had about it, they could not last in the new element in which she now found herself. An element as radically refreshing and strengthening for her spiritual constitution, as the forest air around her was for her body. For what can more powerfully drive away natural melancholy, what can better heal a wounded heart, than calling forth the powers of the soul in

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unrestrained development? What can easier enable us to look at the ruins of previous existence, than the building up of a new one? And her life at St. Anne's was different from her earlier attempts in this respect, that here she did not enter, as at St. Charles, the Sacré Cœur, and Marienberg, into fixed rules, to which she had nothing to do but to submit herself, but here she had to take a part in making the rules, and had to assist in founding the whole affair. Here her good sense for arrangement, her inventive genius, her talent for governing, all came into play, as there her implicit obedience. Bound most closely to Paula, the one supplying for, and animating the other, both of them energetic, they met hindrances and obstacles by increased exertion and good humour, and kept house in the old desolate building with a daily increasing multitude of poor starving children, often picked up out of the hedge, and some servants who attended on them for the love of God. The house had to be made habitable, and sheltered from draughts, walls had to be taken down, and new ones put up. The necessary household furniture had to be procured, and that at the smallest expense, as befits a house for the poor; yet arranged with a certain elegance, as the good taste of the two required, and as they were not absolutely their own masters, they had

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prudently to avoid the appearance of independence, for, like an autocrat, the lofty H — burg domineered over them. The little convent owed to the castle not only its new form, but also its daily maintenance, and in its numerous wants, it was as much the object of necessary care, as to the aristocratic rural monotony of the castle life, it had become a source of unfailing interest, and of a supervision led by an ambiguous feeling, that with such characters as the superioress and her companion, they would have to restrain the trees, for fear they should grow up to heaven. In truth, amid the thousand demands which necessity made, and which they also imposed on themselves, and the boundless confidence in God which inspired them, it was often difficult and even impossible to keep within the limits which the prudence of the founders had appointed. But notwithstanding this difference of sentiment, the noble intentions and constant good will upon one side, and the hearty charity, and perfect good sense on the other, caused any rising impatience to evaporate before it was able to disturb the good understanding.

Gretchen had at first no personal relations with the Count's family, after her fashion of withdrawing herself from social formalities, as things from which she could gain nothing, she had made no visit to the

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Castle, and when any one came from thence to the little convent, she only appeared when occasion required, and without taking part in the conversation. Paula's attempts to bring about a nearer acquaintance, failed partly through Gretchen's obstinacy, and partly through the demeanour of her relatives, who were not accustomed to make first advances. Gretchen's behaviour was ascribed by them more to a sense of her position than her peculiar disposition, and they thought it no less suitable than it was comfortable to herself. An accident changed the scene.

During the absence of his parents the Count's eldest son became ill, and to appearance, seriously so. In their first alarm, his sisters, girls of seventeen and fifteen years of age, turned to the Convent for advice and assistance.

Gretchen did not reflect a moment. She tied up her bundle, and followed on the steps of the messenger. The confidence and sympathy with which she undertook the care of the sick boy, and herself now first coming under their observation, soon gained their young hearts, while a sense of their rank and childish shyness, made them unable to find a medium between them and the serving sister, so that Gretchen, at first secretly amused at their awkward advancing and retreating, at last got tired

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of it, and in a fit of sly humour, one day proposed to the young Countesses that they and she should address one another as "Du."* After the first surprise, which Gretchen much enjoyed, the good children fell on her neck, and assured her that she had taken a real load off their hearts, for that they truly loved her, and did not know how they could show it. This feeling, which soon became in their hearts, a kind of enthusiasm for Gretchen, was most heartily shared by the parents on their return home, and so the Christian love that Gretchen took into the homes and lives of the poor, also here seized her by the hand, carrying her into the castle over all conventional barriers, and placed her in a family circle, that having first approached her with human kindness, soon became affectionate and confidential. According as a man is, so are his circumstances. The real character of others soon opens to a nature true in itself, and never failing in courage and charity to be always equally true to them. Accidents, such as rank, customs, opinions, and whatever else the partition-walls may be called which separate men from each other, lose their importance before the reality which then comes forward. Gretchen experienced this with no member of the circle more

* "Du," Thou, is in Germany a token of equality and affection.

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beneficially than with its head, the old Count. She always in general got on better with men than with women, because her views and opinions accorded more easily with the former than the latter, and between her and the Count, there was an especial sympathy. He never called her anything but his little nun, his little daughter, and with this old man, who was an aristocrat from head to foot, and an autocrat besides, as far as his circle extended, and whose ruggedness, and severe sarcasms were feared by every one, she, otherwise so retiring, went about as freely and unembarrassed, as if he were really, as she called him, her dear little father.

Long after Gretchen had left St. Anne's her friendship continued with the Count's family, until it also underwent the changes of all human things. As here, she was also intimately introduced into the other circles of Paula's widely spread family, and she awakened there, as every where, decided sentiments for and against her. How gladly did she return from each of these excursions back to St. Anne's, and a life which agreed in so many ways with her freedom-loving spirit, indeed, as she found, it agreed only too well with it. For she placed herself under the spiritual direction of her confessor, Pastor Rohde, a man whose outward appearance bore an expression of asceticism and

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seclusion, reminding one of the ancient hermits, who lived amid fasting and contemplation in their lonely forest cells, and only came out, when the distress of others called them. He also seemed only drawn forth from his hermitage by the necessities of mankind. He sacrificed all comforts, he would allow of no female service about him, a boy attended to the housekeeping, on which account his clerical brethren did not like to breakfast with him —he hardly kept what was needful for himself, and gave to the poor whatever he had. He was the refuge of all the afflicted, and there was also attributed to him a particular power over evil spirits. Any how, he must have well understood how to read the folds of the human heart, for Gretchen found in him a spiritual father, such as she had long desired. Singular as his life, was also his death. While in good health, one day when standing at the window, he saw his own spectral funeral come out of the house, and after having with great joy prepared himself for death, he died on the same day and at the same hour as he had foretold.

She gives an illustration of his severity, and of her own obedience in regard to postponement of writing. She felt it a requirement of hers to keep up a lively correspondence with those she loved, but her confessor must have intended to give her

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even in that respect an ascetic education. For she once writes from Coblentz: "How often I enter into inward conflict with our good pastor, I cannot tell you! How long I have been wishing to write to you, and yet I must obey; for even if I sought to carry it through, his words return so forcibly on my ear, that I fancy I hear our Lord Himself threatening me."

Thus bound together in monotonous and weary daily toil, such as the care of children requires, their life moved on, woven out of many changeful colours on a steady background. The little convent stood, as it were, on a field crossed by different streams. Through Paula, and through its dependence upon the castle, it was connected with the nobility, by its active works it seized hold of the people, while by its spiritual tendency it belonged to the Church. On account of this three-fold alliance, it became an object of distrust and supervision to the Protestant authorities, and to the liberal townsmen—of curiosity to an indifferent public, and finally, as only an amateur attempt, it became the object of well-meaning criticism regarding its arrangements and results.

Such opposite judgments passed on their more or less prominent claims, are only inciting and strengthening to energetic minds, since in equal

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measure they demand yielding and resistance, candour and prudence, and, above all, long-suffering patience under the greatest provocations to the contrary, and therefore they might personally turn to the advantage of each of them. But, like a young plant, which grows best in secret, and secluded from the full light of day, it was evident that the institution could never attain perfection till it was entirely united to the Church. This consideration agreed with the dearest wish of the two who had undertaken it, viz., to make the titular convent one in reality, the first vat in the vineyard of this land, altogether desolated and deprived of its religious houses. The more they cherished these thoughts in secret, which would have appeared strange even to those nearest to them, and the less they had any distinct prospect of carrying them out, the richer could fancy deck them with all the grandeurs of the cloister-world, grandeurs of which, as Gretchen gaily remarked, they had as yet nothing on hand but a large supply of brown thread to sew their future habits.

Yet near or far away, this prospect lay before them, like a quiet golden Sunday after their work-day life, and gave to their toil the inciting advantage that it was not a completed effort, following its own circle, but one opening out a way to a more

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perfect condition. The imperfection of their present state might well serve to keep alive their desire of the other. At present when interruptions of every kind hindered the much desired conventual course of the house, so that they preferred not to introduce a rule Gretchen had drawn up, rather than have to break through it every moment, when they felt themselves pinched and dependent in all their arrangements, even when they experienced vexation from their zealous adherence to the Church, because it caused unpleasant shocks to many of their feeble supporters, how sweet was the thought of the time when the grating of the enclosure, for which the place was already set apart, should really be set up, when their daily life should be fixed in firm and unbreakable regulations, when they should have their own priest, with the most Holy Sacrament under their roof, and should depend on no man's favour or disfavour, but only on the Rule of their Order!

Meantime their life flowed on as each day brought it, and while they were longing for cloistral seclusion and uniformity, they still greeted the daily posts which brought them letters, papers, and verbal messages, keeping up a manifold interest with those at a distance, and involving their own daily labours in a lively intercourse with friendly

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houses. If to-day they were burdened with an unwelcome visitor, to-morrow the dearest one might come round the corner; if they had not reason to be contented with the heads of the diocese, they had an understanding with some parish priests and chaplains, who never went by without looking in, and now and then bestowed on the convent the happiness of Holy Mass in its chapel; these were red days in the calendar of the house.

They had sometimes trouble with the children—dealings with outside, when perhaps Catholic relatives would bring children of mixed marriages to the house, and Protestant guardians would take them away again; and worse yet within, for instead of the longed-for Convent Order, God bestowed on them the order of His own House, the blessed Cross, in tedious and painful sickness. Yet there were plenty of days when the actual sign of the house, joy, shone forth without a cloud. Above all, the great Festivals of the Church, and the Saints' days, the preparation for which was in itself a holiday, were delightful, especially to Gretchen, who reserved to herself the decoration of the church, as she once wrote, "I am bringing the altar furniture with me, for I intend to reserve to myself the pleasure of decorating the church."

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Many thought piety was here carried too far, and the little convent had to suffer much blame for the "useless extravagance," but Gretchen remained unmoved, and thought, "though it may displease people, the Angels of Heaven will rejoice at it; did not St. Francis of Sales say, that for the Church everything should be of the best?" Then all her little arts came into exercise, the pretty flower making, and preparing of vestments, which she had learned from good Sister Tarsille at the Hospital. Now and then, also, the artistic taste of her family would awaken, and then saints, apostles, and prophets had to come from her pencil, and what could be applied in colour, varnish, and gilding, was certainly not omitted, although it once occurred that at last Gretchen said of a group, which had cost her much trouble and outlay, "They look just like a noble family come down in the world."

Never to be forgotten by those present were the Summer festivals, when all went out in the early mornings, to meet other processions, from the castle and elsewhere, at the different chapels, where incense and the perfume of the fields, hymns and forest sounds were blended, and mountain and valley, the distant and the near, as assembled together on this little spot, seemed to bear quite

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another radiance than that of the sunlight. And when winter came, and drove the children from their work in the fields and gardens into the house —when the snow covered the paths, and the drift made ruts impassable, so that the little convent stood lonely from without, within doors it was enlightened by the dawning Star of Bethlehem, so cheerful and so homely in whispering expectation and busy invention, till at last the *Puer natus* resounded, the bright Christmas-tree gleamed out from the windows over the dark fields; and the children, who, formerly hungry and ragged, had gathered its dry cones for their poor hearth fire, now stood in dumb delight before its gilded fruits, and the gifts made so rich by poverty and love; then well might the words, "He that receiveth one such little child in My name, receiveth Me," sound with a blessed thrill in the hearts of the two superiors of this house.

The little convent continued always to take deeper root among the people. Petitions, even of such a nature that the enclosure of an ordinarily regulated orphanage would have shut its gates to, were not rejected here by the Christian charity which alone guarded the door. All who came were received, the sick, insane, even those who were suspected of being possessed. Gens-d'armes

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who had come to check the unusual wonders, once beheld the cure of such a one in the convent church, which was full to overflowing. In return, the convent enjoyed the hearty affection, not only of the good, but even of the bad; for when a notorious robber, a dare-devil, suspected of murder, kept the whole neighbourhood in alarm and horror, and at night in the convent they fearfully fastened the doors and windows, and even, by the advice of one of the gens-d'armes, Gretchen begged for a gun from the castle, the wife of the dreaded man, who lived near, came and assured them cordially, "They might leave everything open, her husband would never hurt *them*," and he afterwards said at his trial that he would never have done any harm to their house, out of gratitude, because he had slept every night, a whole winter through, so comfortable and sound in the convent shed.

If any one had then collected all the natural, true, naïve anecdotes which the life of each day brought with it, he could easier make its peculiar charm apparent, a charm by which the little establishment might eventually become a real convent, as the blossom turns to fruit. The impulse, the flight, and the spirit which erected convents dwelt within its kernel, while life with its interests, its manifold forms, and its joyous liberty, yet waved

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through its leaves, imparting colour, fragrance, and freshness to the flower.

Gretchen had become soon acquainted with the people, in spite of their dialect, which she found at first unintelligible. Through "the poor ye have always with you," she soon got to know it. It was remarked with censure that she gave with boundless liberality, even to unworthy persons. When afterwards questioned about it, she explained her conduct by saying that she had far less the intention to alleviate real want, and to help honest people, than to win back perishing creatures, sunk in poverty, coarseness, and vice, by the only way which led to their hearts, that of doing them good. She gained over the sick in her usual way, and spared her strength with them as little as her purse with the others. After she had borne the burden and heat of the day in the convent, in order not to be kept back by Paula, she slipped out secretly in the evening, or at night, to watch by the sick in the village. Her heart beat, indeed, when she passed the old church, and crossed the churchyard —once she thought she saw something strange leaning against the wall—but neither men nor ghosts could scare her from her way, not even worse than those which she experienced from the sick themselves. The only son of a poor woman,

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who had been in service as a cow-herd, was sent home on account of a severe illness, accompanied by dreadful terrors. He was a great strong young man, "as rough as his cattle," and his mother could not restrain him. She came to Gretchen to tell her distress, and that was sufficient for her to promise that she would watch with the son. "Yes, then indeed I learned to pray," she said, when she related it, and when she wished to describe a particularly bad patient, she used to say, "Nearly as bad as my cow-herd." She was not able to hold him in his bed when the fear came over him; in fury he tore everything off him, rushed about, and Gretchen often thought he would kill her. But she could not find it in her heart to leave the poor old mother alone with him, and so she spent many nights beside him.

Another time a woman returned to St. Anne's, whom Gretchen had known very well, but who had not been seen for a long time. She was hardly to be recognised, her features were so wonderfully swelled and her colour was so dark. On Gretchen asking what in all the world could have happened to her, she told her distress with moans and lamentations. Gretchen did not doubt a moment that she had a possessed person before her. She knew well she could not help her, but to send away the

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unhappy creature who had come from a distant village to see her, was what she neither could nor would do. To prevent her coming in contact with others, and especially the children, she took her into her own room, made a bed there for her, and kept her many days and nights alone with herself. The sufferings of the woman were fearful, especially at night, and when Gretchen asked her to pray with her. But Gretchen persevered, keeping the prayer like a shield before her. At last she was obliged to let her go, as wretched as when she came. Another time Gretchen undertook to take a sick person who was troubled in spirit, and it was believed, was under demoniacal influence, from a friend's family to a priest in a distant village, and she shared there, for a whole fortnight, the only spare room and bed with this person for whom she felt a particular antipathy. It was an undertaking which she felt went beyond her powers, for after an urgent request that she would pray much and fervently for the person's recovery she said:—"I assure you, however, if it were to last long, I think it would be all over with me, unless God in consideration of the sacrifice which always attends it, holds His hand over me. But He always does so, in ample measure, and in an inexpressibly loving manner."

It was otherwise not her way to give utterance

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in such cases to faintheartedness, and no one who saw her submit herself with untroubled brow to the most repugnant things, as if they followed as a matter of course, could suspect that she always, and on every occasion felt the full resistance of her nature against them. Hers was nothing less than what is understood by a "Martha nature." Rather according to her South-German temperament, she was disposed to the "dolce far niente," and it was charity which carried her out of herself, and away beyond the appointed circle of the sisters of mercy, even so far that she had to overcome her dislike to what was to her most difficult of all, an offence against morals. The following example will show it:—

In one of her visits to Coblentz, where, according to the wish of her parents she spent some weeks every year, she found her sister much affected by the distress of a young girl. This poor orphan, almost half-witted creature out of a little country town, had been brought by her guardian to Coblentz, and apprenticed to a large millinery shop where she had been led astray by a young Frenchman. The compassionate endeavours of sympathising people had succeeded so far in averting open scandal, but so much had gone abroad that they had to think of removing the unfortunate girl for

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the future to a distant place, where no evil tongues could follow her. Her protectors obtained for her the permission to establish a business of her own at W., and the only difficulty now was to get her removed to the strange town respectably. No one had yet been found who would or could undertake it, when Gretchen was given to understand the state of things. She let the girl come to her, and seeing she was not wicked and vicious, but rather full of contrition and horror at the past, she undertook to accompany her. At W., she had to engage a house, to arrange the fitting it up and establishing it, and before the necessary furniture was got together, she had to sleep with her protégée upon straw, which was certainly the easiest part of this mission, to Gretchen the most difficult one of any in her life.

Besides the unfortunate persons we have noticed, there was no want of souls seeking for comfort, driven about in the world, who turned to her, "such," as she says, "who join their tortures carefully together, and thereby imagine they can escape from them." For these too, she had an open heart, and the sight of their spiritual misery, moved her to exclaim: "Oh, if one could only help these poor people, how gladly I would give my life to do it!" But she was sharp and rough towards exaggerated

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piety, which is often found in women, and to such as were only Catholics in form. In such cases she called their many exercises of devotion, their frequent confessions and communions, "walls of enclosure, within which self-love and all evil can carry on their traffic undisturbed." Such by-roads lay certainly distant from her soul. Nearer to her was another, the danger of which she soon perceived, viz.: to be drawn with mind and soul into the combat, which later broke into open flames in the occurrence at Cologne. The pressure in which the Church was held at that time, the favour shown to Hermesianism on the one side, and negligent priests on the other, the daily attacks on others, and detractions, all which, as Gretchen said, "even when a child had given her bloody scratches," filled her with anger when she grew older, and understood them better. But it was her nature, from outward things to return upon herself, and from thence to take a more calm and unembarrassed view of the whole; and it was plain to her, that when a soul goes forth to enter such battles, it leaves its own house behind it desolate and poor; and seeing the sin that is inseparable from party spirit in such combats, she withdrew from them as much as she could.

She remarks here how hurtful were not only actions and words, but also every rash judgment in

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thought, and all else that was contrary to charity, and adds, "Oh, how much have I there to repent of!" More suitable to her than such skirmishing on the borders, was a glance into the interior territory of the Church itself, and the want she felt to submit to its teaching, not merely blindly, but with conscious conviction. To do this she instructed herself particularly on the doctrine of indulgences, which she did not understand, and therefore felt a dislike to. When she was satisfied about that, she was filled with the deepest sorrow at the prejudicial actions and blunders that she saw, as she herself may express it: "See how our affairs stand with government, and yet that is the smallest evil from which the Church suffers; in her own heart she carries the most poisonous thorns, which torment her, and would kill her, if our Lord had not promised to be always with her. These are the thousand unchristian and haughty priests, and all the dry branches and members, of which I am, perhaps, the most withered of all. Oh, let us pray for ourselves and for our brethren, we all need it." And, after Bishop Wittman's death, "Oh, how desolate the Church is becoming! one light going out after another, instead of these only burnt-out wicks on the candlesticks. What wonder if soon all should be dark!" Another time, when a measure, the

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success of which Gretchen had much at heart, because she hoped from it a renovation and strengthening of Catholic life, had been brought about by a friend of hers, by means of an evasion of the ecclesiastical authorities, who were disinclined to it, and by means of an appeal to the secular government, she expresses her displeasure undisguisedly thus: "That you should have taken this course displeases me, in spite of your reasons. There is a prudence in it which I consider wrong, and, humanly speaking, ignoble. The means must be simple and pure, as the end, then it pleases God, and His blessing will not be withheld, whereas human prudence often excludes God's help. Your success does not give me pleasure, because it comes from the wrong quarter; and it displeases me in the king, that he should take to himself a right which you, but not the Church, accorded to him. Your action has been politic, but not Catholic, and therefore, for the Church, very impolitic."

From her letters of that period in the little convent I select one, which shows her sensibility for other things than those already touched upon. "The Ave-Maria bell from all the church towers awoke me. I was just then in Perugia, and saw such beautiful churches and antique temples that I wept for joy. I was dreaming that you and I were

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going about the country as pilgrims. That was because last night I heard tell of Florence and Naples and Rome, and you cannot think how all that works in my soul. I often feel like a child that just begins to understand, and then is intoxicated with a mass of stories and fairy tales. I can't at all imagine how I should feel, if I ever got to see such things. Our good God knows what is best for me, yet I should think that such things must powerfully carry one to the love of God. Who knows, however? they, perhaps, might captivate the eye and heart too much, and I might be too much dazzled to recognize the Master. In such a case it were certainly better to be blind altogether!"

Yes, gladly would she have shut eye, and ear and heart to all impressions that crossed her aim; gladly was she a hermit in the world, as Tauler describes her: "A true hermit, who kept all her life long single and pure, and apart from all creatures." If the thought of becoming such a hermit floats before every Christian soul, as its highest attainment, still the hermitages have usually very movable boundaries, and only few believe them to be drawn so closely and strictly about them as Gretchen did, in the feeling and continual remembrance of her particular spiritual obligations. How bitter and annihilating she felt every diverging to

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the creature, and how empty and untrue appeared then to her her own exterior deportment, become "her second nature!" Every one might well join in her confession of the "Peter's tears," in the softer words of one of her previous letters, but it is not everyone who would easily accuse himself with such sharp words as hers, in a letter to Paula, regarding the impossibility of being altogether sincere. "First, most hearty thanks for all proofs of undeserved affection, which I can only understand by supposing you do not really know me. May God show me to you, as, in my pride, I dare not. I never wish to deceive you, and yet I feel that it occurs. I have so enchained falsehood and deception through my life, that I can hardly distinguish what is really nature. It would be astonishing if no thorn from it had remained with you. I tell you all this that you may not cease to pray for me."

Her native melancholy, and her distrust of herself, were not to be overcome by all her active and successful labour. Even amid the prospect of their undisturbed remaining together, she was tormented by the thought of their being broken up, and adds: "Don't you think I am foolish, to be looking forward to future sorrows? But that is the way of my perverse nature, and I have not sufficient

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strength of grace to amend it. Help me with your prayers." And, further on: "I feel myself so dumb before people, I can hardly open my lips. Those are good times, when we can't get on with people, but are the more familiar with God, and then all goes right; but when we *there* find nothing, when we have called in vain, and at last become dumb even there . . . . Oh, pray for me, the poorest of all, and cease not to make the children do so too. I wished to write to A. to beg for the exchange of the land, but by writing and speaking I can only destroy and ruin, if the Lord does not again come to our assistance, and for that my repeated unfaithfulness leaves me no hope. You will surely undertake the task for the love of God, and speak to A. It would grieve me too much if the affair should suffer delay through me. You will do it, will you not? Our Lord will not let you off, and to have certainty about it, do not do it at all for love of me, but only for Him alone. There are here some very interior souls, especially among the poor; these shall pray for you. Do you the same with the children for me, while I here must speak for the affair, so that all of my own—the wicked 'I myself,'—and my own spirit may leave me, and only the Spirit of God speak in me."

We see how far she was removed from laying claim

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to the praise of Paula's words: "All that occurred at St. Anne's of good was through her." However much she believed she might easily be spared, for herself she had no other wish than here to live and die. But her fate, never to be allowed to remain in any place, followed her here again, only with the difference, that the end of this section of her life was less violent, and not accompanied by such shocks as the previous ones. For, on leaving St. Anne's after a two years' residence there, to recover from the exertions she had too abundantly laid upon herself, she had not the remotest idea that here a period of her life was closed. And yet not only was this the case, but her life took from that time a different turn. For this fourth attempt to find the way of salvation in communities united together for that especial purpose was also her last!

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNTRY HOUSE ON THE WESER.

THE transition from the common relations of companionship and sick nursing into the circle of personal connections, was not only of the greatest importance to Gretchen, but it also moderates and alters the picture we have obtained of her in the foregoing history. On the even background of her early years, her life appears simpler, more self-collected, even more perfected, than in the changeful and unequal course of individual relationship. She still remained faithful to what she practised under all circumstances, not to live for herself, but for others: yet love given in the service of God makes a person simpler, because it keeps self a prisoner, while the mixed love of personal inclination brings this self along with it in all its manifold forms. In so far as this is the case here, superficial observation, to which the object never appears near enough, might find the transition a backward step.

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Yet it was not so, but rather the pathway of a soul, to whom the rare task was given to arrive at its full development. This does not require that self should be entirely left out of the circle of life, but rather that it should remain in the midst of it, so as to be tried from every side. Each heart has its world, and if Gretchen's was inwardly circumscribed by early vows and habits, yet this apparently narrow world, amid her unaccentuated circumstances, offered her all that she required to enable her to struggle, to die, and to conquer.

Gretchen's next journey was to a beautifully-situated country seat on the Weser, where Frau von Z., a near relative of Paula's, lived with her sick daughter, Veronica. A doctor in whom they had confidence was called in for Gretchen. After the conversation she had with him, she writes thus to Paula: "Doctor S. has just left me. He says there is as yet no danger, but speaks of so much care, so much necessary medical attendance, that he wishes to send me home till next summer. . . . I cannot tell you how the thought of going back to Coblentz oppresses me; you can well imagine it. . . . . I rely now on our good God, and on my good constitution, not as if sickness or death were

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hard to me; no, that is not the case with either the one or the other; and even if the importance of life could not be disproved, things in such distant prospect are distasteful and oppressive to me, and I think I could die in peace if I had done what is compatible with the engagements we have entered into. For the rest, I do not believe that this affair will end in dying, and my presentiments seldom deceive me."

We can easily understand that it would have been most painful to Gretchen to go home for the third time sick to her parents, and she willingly accepted the invitation to remain at B——, a residence which Paula had purposely chosen for her. She knew Gretchen well enough to be aware that in these repeated terminations to her journeys, melancholy would fall upon her, and be as dangerous an enemy as sickness, and she thought that Veronica's neighbourhood and society would give her the best weapons to guard against it. Veronica required no more care than Gretchen's strength was able to afford, and therefore a separate room was allotted to the latter. Veronica herself had for years only been able to take a few steps from her bed to the sofa; yet her illness was not so much her mistress as her doorkeeper, to ward off noise and the demands of daily intercourse, without repress-

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ing the various aims of an active mind. This was apparent at a glance: drawing and painting apparatus, books, from the best poets down to the driest archives, documents, genealogical trees, old armour, urns, a piano, pictures, and stucco models, tidily arranged, filled these two bright rooms, which commanded a view of a cheerful landscape, with a river, comprising mountains and woods, lying under the radiance of an August sun. Certainly Gretchen could have found no more pleasant residence, where also there were so many of her own objects of interest, of which art was one. But Veronica herself struck on the deepest and strongest point of her character, making all the others resound more joyfully. Among all persons to whom Gretchen ever attached herself, none was more different from herself in character and mode of life, and yet none entered so deeply into her heart and her fortunes.

To understand this better, though we cannot analyze the mystery of affection, we must be able to put before us Veronica's character and appearance. But, even as a painter rarely succeeds in representing the particular haze that gives to a landscape its greatest charm, it is equally difficult to express in words the certain something which makes one person attractive, and even irresistible

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to others. This something is like a haze spread over the whole being of the person, toning down the strong lines of character, by clouding over, rather than veiling failings and deficiencies, and uniting all into an agreeable whole.

But as an unskilful painter would do well to restrict himself to drawing, I would also content myself with a light sketch of Veronica's character and way of life, leaving the rest to the fancy of the reader. When she was in her eighteenth year, a malady which the doctors at first thought to be consumption, but afterwards a complaint of the nerves, came over Veronica, and took her from her youthful enjoyments into the solitude of a sick room. All that had hitherto been done for her recovery had been in vain, and it was thought best to leave it to nature and to time. Veronica's manner of enduring her condition was favourable to such quiet treatment. Without complaint, passing lightly over sympathising questions, she spent her days in a succession of serious occupations, that were interrupted only by her illness. A near cousin of the poetess Annette von Droste-Hülfshoff, she was descended by her mother's side from a Westphalian family richly endowed with remarkable talents. She had her full share of them, especially a great talent for drawing and painting, in which she

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showed an extraordinary power of invention, full of imagination and expression. At this time she was occupied with perspective and architectural compositions, and as it was her way to do nothing superficially, no study was too fatiguing or tedious for her, in spite of the discomfort some works occasioned her in a recumbent position. Grown up among persons of noble education, she knew how to gain interest from what was most out of the way and driest, not with the mental greediness that seeks everywhere to pick up a drop of froth, but with the energy of a mind neither worn out with passions nor with fantastic imaginations. She was not a being made up of contradictory materials, but in herself clear, orderly, cheerful and firm, a character that instinctively turns away from all that is ambiguous, impure, and capable of disturbing inward peace. It is true she was not free from inward struggles, for she accused herself of being proud and selfish, but the conflicts in which her soul was reflected lay mostly between the movements of an active spirit, to which, as she said, labour and toil were its natural element, as water to a fish,—between her joy of existence, in which after all her long suffering she still felt the "gaiety of childhood,"—and in being tied down by the malady whose gnawing influence entered the depths of her

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soul. Intelligence and an iron strength of will certainly came to her assistance, but the very sensible increase of sickness, which often made every occupation impossible, the long sleepless nights, the often very lonely days, brought times of which she says, that "all her proud strength had melted into discouragement and cowardice. In these dark hours, however, when, so early removed from the sunshine of youth, she lost even the quiet moon of peace, and she felt the deepest dereliction, that from herself, then the morning star had arisen upon her, in whose light her sorrowful path appeared "bright and gleaming," where she felt herself carried like a child in the arms of God through all the miseries of life, and looking forward with David, exclaimed: "I will yet thank Him for all that He has done unto me."

It was distressing to see such a richly gifted being in the heavy chains of sickness, which pressed on her all the more the less she complained, but the pain of such impressions on our minds was neutralized by Veronica's peculiarities. Around her was spun a web of natural grace, alienation from the actual world, intelligence and ingenuousness, firmness and softness, impulse and reserve, pride of ancestry and originality, which gave to her society a charm always new, passing from the gravest

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earnestness to the liveliest merriment, and, as it were, hedging her round as within a princely domain. Before her every one had involuntarily to retire who could injure or disturb her peace.

To be beloved by such a being, and even soon to feel that she was indispensable to her, carried Gretchen easily over her own troubles, all the more so that plans and projects came into consideration which required all her spirit of enterprise. There was question of a residence for Veronica in the South, a plan that had often been mentioned, but on account of its apparently insurmountable difficulties, had never been seriously entertained except by Veronica herself, who had a certain presentiment that her destination was not to languish here slowly to death, but that, on the other side of the Alps, recovery and a new life awaited her. A family, closely allied by friendship to Gretchen, went to Nice on account of an invalid, and that gave a fresh impulse to the possible carrying out of their plan. Veronica was to join them in Gretchen's company, for there were insurmountable obstacles to her mother's going with her; already the place and time of meeting were appointed, when the project failed. It was difficult to everyone, and impossible for Gretchen, to allow Veronica after such a prospect, to sink back again into her old hopeless

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and dispirited condition. She by no means overlooked the difficulties, but she did not consider them unconquerable, and she pictured to herself the enterprise in brilliant colours. The book of life is like an old manuscript. As there the writer illuminated the first leaves of his chapters with all the skill he could command, so man adorns the initials of a new portion of his life with all that he possesses of faith, hope, and charity.

But much combined to break off the first fresh bloom of their undertaking. It was hardly mentioned, when it encountered universal contradiction, which appears by the following letter from Gretchen to Antonie, a friend of Veronica's of many years' standing, and initiated into all the circumstances. "Yesterday I received the enclosed letter from Paula, which really makes me somewhat afraid of myself. I had purposely written calmly—if you like, lightly—about the journey and my going with her, because I am afraid of taking up things passionately, and never seek to do so. And I have naturally a great fear of yielding and consenting too much, if it relates to things which we think right to do, but which may become in many ways difficult. In the end nothing comes of it but turning soft, and often, even falling into cowardice and wavering. You will understand without many

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words, that my heart is not very light about this journey, on which Veronica's life or death depends, and that, if there were question of choice, I should prefer that D. should go instead of me, if not exactly for the nursing of Veronica. But you know well that this is impossible, and now, we have only to ask, is the journey necessary, and how can it be best arranged? If I am clear on these points, I can carry it on to the end, and objections do not turn me easily aside; but I confess, in this affair, where all are against me, and no one on my side, I am almost afraid. Tell me frankly, am I too bold and rash, and blindly carried away by ideas? I trust much to your prudence, and everything to your love for Veronica." But in Antonie, who herself immediately arrived, Gretchen had summoned her worst opponent. In truth, things were so circumstanced, that Gretchen might well be accused of rashness. How multiplied were the difficulties! Veronica's helpless condition, disposed to inflammatory ailments, her total want of habit in exposure to wind and weather, the sufferings that even a long drive would give her, and the consequent necessity to make the journey as much as possible by water, and the idea of a canal going from Strasburg to Besançon, and only navigated by goods' boats, was particularly unpleasant to

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them. Then their lodging, and the necessary repose in the strange uncomfortable inns, and the scanty funds they had for so long and expensive a journey! All this was talked over again, and the easier and simpler Gretchen represented things, the more they thought it right to distrust her. Thus they found the proposal to journey from convent to convent, instead of from inn to inn, too adventurous and strange for them to be satisfied with it. And lastly, if even they were disposed to trust everything to Gretchen's *savoir faire*, they always fell back on the consideration, that she was herself too delicate, and too little sure of her own strength, to be entrusted with Veronica, this jewel of a numerous relationship. Already in imagination, they saw the two, sick in a foreign land, without a protector, exposed to accidents of every kind: and if they spared Veronica these ideas, for she adhered to the thoughts of the journey with unshaken confidence, Gretchen had to endure all the more of them. But they did not cause her to waver at all in her determination, for she saw in them only the exaggerations of unpractical ignorance of things, but the contradiction, accompanied with many a bitter reproach, the mortifying coldness, changed now and then into former warmth,—in short all the ill tempers on account of her, as

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they thought, disturbing the peaceful course of life with unnecessary agitations, made Gretchen so unhappy, that, as she wrote to Paula, she "would rather run away altogether." But yet more, the presence of Antonie excited feelings in her, of which she had never thought herself capable.

For though man may think he wanders through his heart as through a well known house, each new conflict of life shows that places, over which he may have lightly stepped, are full of concealed trap-doors and pitfalls, out of which come forms whose dwelling under his roof he never dreamed of. It is often seen that in the relationship of two intimate friends nothing is so important as the approach of a third party. Doubly so was it now the case with regard to Antonie, who, with all the claims and might given to her by old friendship, and above all by Veronica's affection, entered into the golden circle in which Gretchen had as yet lived in the happy belief that, as it contained all her own thoughts and feelings, it also contained those of her friend. Too proud to betray the grief of her mistake, and her rising jealousy, she often tried quietly to withdraw. But Veronica, who did not like her to leave her side, called her always back again, and forced her to undergo a strain, which she bore the whole day with a cheerful countenance, but put her to the

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severest trials when she was alone with Antonie late in the evening.

Then it would happen, that when Antonie till late in the night pressed on her sharply and unsparingly, and took the whole undertaking to pieces, throwing them at her feet as a mass of selfish quixmotis, and Gretchen, well knowing how she could cast back on her the reproach of jealousy, but too proud to do so,—and because she feared no one as she did herself,—with her hands fast clenched, would silently turn her face to the wall, to overcome her burning anger, which amounted to positive aversion.

During these combats about the journey, the latter, however, decided for itself. The doctors declared that Veronica could not live over the following winter in the north. So they chose between two evils that which appeared least certain, and the journey was fixed for the beginning of summer. Gretchen went before that to Coblentz, to pass the last of the time with her family. It was natural, that, the more contradiction around her was silenced, her timidity and distrust of herself found words, as is proved by some fragments of letters to Paula of this period.

"PADERBORN, April 11th.

"Fancy, the diligence does not go on till to-mor-

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row! At first I was quite wild, for I find every moment insupportable which I have to spend among strangers, who yet know me enough to torment me. I would rather run as far as my feet could carry me, so as to see no one, to hear no voice, and not to be obliged to speak myself. But yet I went to H——'s; Chaplain T. was also there, and I spoke so lightly about the journey that they must have supposed I was free and gay as a bird in the air. Oh, Paula, I often put on these feathers to silence my inward torment, my hourly increasing discouragement. What good can it do for me to speak of it? God alone can help me, and you through prayer. On my map stands 'Mademoiselle Felleisen' (knapsack), that sounds ready for a journey!"

"COBLENTZ, 13th.

"You can understand how glad my friends were to see me, and I, too, was happy, I can tell you. When we are always with our parents, we do not sufficiently feel the great blessing of possessing them; but when we have been far away from them, and miserable and forsaken into the bargain, then we would willingly buy each moment with our life. Oh, life is a hard grace! I should like to be more thankful for it; but a thousand times the thought

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occurs to me of a long future, which, perhaps, may be appointed to me for eight or ten years, and then comes over me a fear, a weariness of spirit, that almost crushes me; and yet, God knows, I must do and suffer much, and perhaps endure the hardest lot, so as to die in peace. Pray for me, I will also for you, that we may be glad to die, but not from weariness."

But her discouragement, her want of confidence, was not alone caused by herself. Since Antonie had come between them, a thorn had remained in her connection with Veronica. A misunderstanding, increased by distance, deepened into the painful conviction, that Veronica's inclination for her was not so much from free affection, as from a feeling that Gretchen was necessary to her. She expresses this to Paula, to whom she had given a hint of it already—she was generally much more communicative by letter than by word of mouth (letters turn so easily into conversations with one's self), in these words: "You are distressed about me; do not be anxious. Among all the deep corruption of my nature, and all the sorrow that life gives me, I feel the Hand that holds me. I feel it most of all when I am loneliest and most forsaken. What I have lost was unutterably sweet, but it was not

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the best. Only from my birth I have been so selfish, that the smallest thing immediately appears to me everything."

This frame of mind increased in her till she doubted if it would not be better to hold back from the journey altogether, and leave it to some one else, although she was conscious that she was more fit for the task than any one. In this inward strife she wandered to Bornhofen, and laying down all her distress and doubt before the Altar of the Mother of God, she was determined to follow any sign that God would give her, whichever way it pointed. So a few days afterwards, she was following the Corpus Christi procession through the streets of Coblentz, with a quiet mind, when the postman, hastening past her, gave her a letter, addressed in Veronica's handwriting, and with the post mark "Frankfurt." After eight days' journey she had arrived there, and awaited Gretchen with anxiety, without having an idea what conflicts the other had been enduring. How quickly vanished all the dreary veils that had been covering Gretchen's spirit! All her joyous energy returned, and as soon as she had taken leave of her friends, she hastened to Frankfurt, where she arrived at midnight, and went direct to Veronica's bed, who had not been able to sleep for expectation. How lightly

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did Veronica's beloved hand smooth away the last sad line on Gretchen's brow!

They remained three weeks at Frankfurt, partly to consult Dr. Passavant, and partly to make preparations for their journey. During this time they were much and intimately with Steingass, Veit, and other artists of their circle. Dorothea Schlegel visited them daily, and Steingass thought these two companions were "mediæval beings in strength, courage, simplicity, and ingenuousness." At length on the 7th July, the day of departure came. Gretchen had engaged a woman as servant, and so they travelled, supplied with both the needful and the superfluous, for, on account of Veronica's love of arms, and expectation of dangerous adventures, they were provided with pistols and a cutlass!

In the following letters Gretchen gives an agreeable picture of their journey and residence at Nice. Considering the terms on which she and Antonie stood, it may appear strange that they are, with few exceptions addressed to her. But it was not Gretchen's character to bear malice for offences done to her, especially under excitement which she only too well understood; and besides, she may have known that her secret thoughts were far more rancorous than Antonie's words. She was also too good-hearted to deprive the melancholy one left

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behind of the comfort of frequent news, and, lastly, scolding and strife had not been able to remove a certain attraction which the hearts of the two had for one another.

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CHAPTER IX.

HER JOURNEY TO NICE.

"On the Main, July 7th, 1835.

"To Antonie.

" E are sitting in the market boat. Veronica breathes so quickly and loud, it goes through my soul, yet she always says it is all right. Also I may tell you for your comfort, she has invincible courage, and is very cheerful."

"Mayence.

"I left off yesterday, for the poor soul began to be very unwell, which increased till we arrived here. The market boat, which is very small, was dreadfully full, and the cabin down below was sprinkled for sweeping. So we were obliged to go on deck, and remain among all the people on a miserable place, without one of the donkeys moving to give us a seat. I was so furious that I would have

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liked to whip the whole company into the Rhine. Then we came to Höchst, when a great thunder-storm came on, and drove us below, where it was fearfully hot. Veronica always got worse—her fever and pains in the chest increased rapidly. Thank God, to-day she is better; I have moved her sofa to the window, and while I write, she is sketching the ships, and what she can see of the shore."

"On the Canal, July 15th, 1835.

"We are just passing close by the Jura. Yesterday we started, and we hope to be at Besançon the day after to-morrow. I wish you could see our arrangements! We live like gipsies. Veronica and I sleep in the cabin of the boat, which is separated by boards and shawls from the ante-chamber, in which our fat maid sleeps. That apartment is again separated by shawls from the sleeping-room of the crew. Now you can fancy how we are situated. We are so tormented by flies and fleas that we have to sleep in veils and gloves, but Veronica accommodates herself splendidly to everything. Our maid is the *pathétique* itself, she always speaks with a screwed-up mouth, so that nobody can understand her. She is to return from Besançon, but is a good person, and, notwithstanding that she has officiated for twenty years as cook, she

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takes the humblest fare with preference, and with or without a spirit of penance, she sleeps every night on boards with a pillow."

"BESANÇON, 2nd August.

"I wished to write to you immediately on our first day here, but every thing went so against the grain, and our first entry and lodging were so mournfully adventurous, that I could not collect my ideas to write. The last night before coming to Besançon, we were alone among very rough fellows. Veronica provided herself with the loaded pistols in her little corner, I remained up all night, with the cutlass at my side, and we built up a kind of fortification before us, of our four-horse-power maid and her bed. But all went over quietly and well, I heard no sound but Veronica's breathing. We arrived here late on Saturday, and wished once more, like other people, to have a room and a bed. The skipper ran into the town to fetch a carriage. After ten o'clock I heard him coming back again, and at the same moment our servant scolding at the carriage in violent emotion. I ran out, and found a very simple waggon, without steps, only with the four pegs at the corners. What was the use of scolding? it was too late to send into town for another carriage; so we put all our luggage

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in the waggon, took the bottom out of a bedstead, put mattresses on it, and Veronica on the top. Four men carried the affair, I walked beside it and carried the lantern, our maid hung on behind the waggon, not being able to run fast enough to keep up with it. Thus we made our entry into Besançon, a tolerably long distance off. I felt very melancholy, the bearers with Veronica, and my lantern at the side, made me think so much of a funeral. It reminded Veronica of the processions of the Goddess of Liberty: the people indeed brought us to a very republican inn; our room, above the stable, smelt, and was in other respects very like a stable, if we except a few traces of better times. I was inconsolable to be able to find no better spot for the poor thing, but thank God, she was none the worse, and slept well all night, when the thunderstorm was not too violent. Early in the morning I went through the town with a boy, to all the convents I could find, to ask for a lodging—no success; until at last I got into the Hospital of the Sisters of the Seven Dolours, by means of a Protestant minister, who was preaching in their neighbourhood, in what had once been a Capuchin church. I heard him from far off, and in the idea that it was our own service, I went in! what he said was no doubt very beautiful, but I

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did not understand him, and went away disconsolate. Then in the next garden I saw one of these nuns, and told her of my distress. She promised to receive us, and we went that same day. We found a charming lodging, and the greatest care and kindness. The sister who attends on us has to take care of more than a hundred, and yet she appears to live only for us. Veronica is cared for as she probably never was before. The sister is quite jealous and will insist on doing every thing for her, so that I live like a pick-pocket. We cannot at all accustom ourselves to all these comforts after our river-boat life, and we fell upon the good substantial food like the seven lean kine. Veronica still always dreams at night she is in the cabin, and wakens me, to ask me to pull down the sail-cloth."

"CHALONS SUR SAONE, the 2nd August.

"Here we are again received into a convent, and excellently cared for, if not quite so much at home as with the good Sisters at Besançon, yet we are treated with great kindness. The Reverend Mother at first did not wish to have us, but I remained begging like an old Jew, till at last I gained the victory and permission to bring in our dearest Mousie. If any of our friends ever travel on this

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road, they should take up their quarters wherever we have done so, then they will be lodged as in Abraham's bosom, leaving out of account the little intermediate halting places, which all may find out for themselves. Last night we lodged in a public house, where all the French carters go, it was a graceless establishment! But Veronica has royal courage! Our grandeur undergoes very sudden and remarkable changes. Yesterday hardly anything to eat, to-day all served on silver plate; yesterday hardly a bed for the two of us, to-day two magnificent crimson canopies over our heads; yesterday hardly a wooden chair, to-day gilded easy chairs, chests of drawers with marble tops, &c.; yesterday a little peep-hole, to-day a broad passage before our door with splendid painted windows. You see we are guarded against both pride and humility.

"Lyons, August 8th.

"After some night quarters, of which we had better be silent than speak, we are here, again most comfortably provided for, which we owe to a Jesuit. The good man recommended us in such a manner to a lady, that she could not close an eye the first night of our being here, because she had not been able to come and see us in the evening. Since

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then, she is so attentive to us, that a mother could not do more. She engaged a little room for us at Fourvière, with a magnificent view, and the best care and attendance, and every day she comes from five miles distance off, to visit us. Before entering to our lodgings, we went to Notre Dame; Veronica, carried in an arm-chair, sketched a great deal. We quickly make many friends, especially Veronica. Every one likes the good soul, they look upon her as half a saint. To these lively, sprightly people, it seems strange to see any one suffering so quietly, so cheerful and calm; we Germans are generally strange to them, as indeed by both nation and country, we are far apart. One thing is especially disagreeable to me, the pious talk in every place, and at every time. The people whose acquaintance we have made, are really pious, and this way of talking has become nature to them, but I feel a hundred times as if I must jump into the Rhone to cool myself. We sit through it like dumb dogs. Everything in its proper time, then it may be an alms and a charity, but in this way we can have too much, even of the best. Chaplain S. may have had this in his mind, when he spoke of the unbearableness of pious people; I feel it also, only I dare not preach about it."

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"MONTPELIER, October.

"The cholera, which was rather severe here, detained us a long time at Lyons. Good Madame Perrin was so anxious about our journey, that she gave us her own man-servant. The steamer sailed at five o'clock in the morning. Veronica was like no human being, we had wrapped her up so. The company looked at us with suspicion, owing to the cholera, and so we had the good fortune to be left alone all day in the ladies' cabin. The doctor had warned us against the bad air at Avignon, and as it was besides stormy and cold, and the carrying Veronica to and fro is always difficult, we resolved to remain all night in our little cabin. We sent our Joseph into the town to fetch some things, and also to seek out a Madame Poullin, a remarkable person, of whom Madame Perrin had told us much. She is a woman of humble condition, can hardly read and write, and only speaks patois, but is in connection with many distinguished influential people, and many great heads in France, Italy and Spain. She was lately in Rome, and was sent by the Pope with commissions to Don Carlos in Spain; and all these things appear nothing out of the way to her. But this prophet has honour in her own country, for she exercises a wonderful power over the common people here. If in their quarrels they

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are near murdering each other, some one calls Madame Poullin, and the wildest people separate quietly. Oh, I will just acknowledge it in God's name, she even had to get us out of a row! and though you should cry out ten times 'Didn't I say so!'—Well listen. Scarcely had the passengers left the ship, when all order and rule were at an end, there and was a hideous noise. I gave a glance on deck, and saw a lot of rabble, amusing themselves with the ship's crew. Music also came, and then there was riot, screaming and stamping, as if the infernal regions had broken loose. Veronica this time herself lost courage. She was in feverish terror, and as you may imagine, I was not comfortable. At any moment they might take it into their heads to make the round of the vessel, and find us out, and what a night we might probably have had, for even good Joseph could hardly have protected us. At last he arrived, along with Madame Poullin; we heard her loud powerful voice; the music and the riot ceased, and the crowd disbanded. She remained with us till late in the night, and nothing stirred till morning."

Of their conversations she writes:—"There was no possibility of getting into a convent here, but we have got a lodging among good people, and we have no want of visitors. A Madame N. and her

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daughter, who live close to us, visit us eight or nine times a day. That is rather too much of a good thing, and I am so tired of French chatter, that on my road home to-day, I followed three German soldiers for a long distance. What they said was not intellectual nor edifying, and hardly intelligible, but the healthy German tones attracted me more than the finest French talk. At last I spoke to them, they were two from Lorraine, and one from Alsace. They were also quite touched to hear a German speak, and thanked me politely, and I went home as happy as if I had found a treasure."

Detained at Montpellier by a considerable sickness and great weakness of Veronica's, our travellers did not arrive till December at Nice, where a convent received them, and after the long, changeful, and anxious journey, gave them again the feeling of being in "Abraham's bosom." As Gretchen's tension of mind, with which she had fulfilled her mission, decreased, the consequences of her exertions became so visible, that the nuns thought her looking five years older after the first three months of repose. But even this repose was of short duration. In spring Veronica became dangerously

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ill of an inflammatory fever. Gretchen feared the worst, and even when recovery set in, she did not conceal from herself the serious nature of the condition on which even the South appeared to have such little influence.

The fragment of a letter to a spiritual friend, the Chaplain S., testifies to her despondency of soul. "What do you say to our friend B.? Every one for his own affair! How much good time we spend standing on the high road, swallowing in the dust of passers by! And oh, how long we must struggle and never get any further, trying to separate from ourselves everything that hinders an equal balance. Now I will tell you how things have gone with me during the last time. To my shame I must acknowledge, that my discouragement has arrived at such a point, that all my undertaking appears to me like insanity. Thank God, such times do not last long, and only in those where light is hidden from me, I am as timid as Peter when our Lord let him come to Him upon the water. That such a state does not arise without one's own fault is certain, I can also generally trace it. Oh, I am so lazy in prayer, and my thoughts fly in all directions. Because I allow them to roam too freely at other times, it becomes so fearfully difficult to control them. The spirit should educate

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the soul, but it happens to me a thousand times, that the soul, like an undutiful son, seizes the government to itself, till the spirit again wrestles with God in unspeakable sighs. Oh what a burden the soul in its ruined condition is to the spirit! I believe my path is only slow and through dry sandy deserts of inward suffering and temptations, and patience is for me the most necessary virtue, because it is exactly most opposed to my nature, which violently and by force seeks to accomplish everything in a moment, and when that is impossible, sinks back in discouragement and weakness. It is a happiness to me, that I can speak out to you as to my own conscience, and distance only makes the difference that it is more rare, and less in detail than by word of mouth. If you can, help me out of this state of discouragement and uncertainty, as well through your prayer, as through that which God will make known to you. I give you much to write, but God rewards every trouble."

Antonie had undertaken to admonish Gretchen to patience and perseverance, but she answered her shortly with the words: "The gravity of our last doctors, and the feeling of having this poor little morsel of life so alone in my hands, far from all that could do her good—these are more impressive field-preachers than all your admonitions."

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When Veronica had so far recovered that they were able to move, the two friends left the narrow enclosure of the convent, to seek for better air in a more openly situated dwelling, and to be able to make little excursions, from which the doctor promised much. In winter they returned again behind the convent grille. So passed nearly three years, during which Veronica's health was so much re-established that she could walk, and they were able to prolong their excursions further, even into Provence. The following fragments of Gretchen's letters give an account of their life at that time.

"NICE, 6th June, 1836.

"TO ANTONIE.

"Our little excursions give me especial pleasure. They are generally through quiet lonely roads, where everything is thick and solitary, among the hills. Veronica rides on her donkey, I walk beside her. In this way we went yesterday to what was formerly the Abbey of St. Constantine. On one side we were in the shadow of tall Indian corn, on the other side was Cimelion, where the Capuchins were singing vespers at the top of the hill. Among all the foreign appearance of the place, that music gave me such a wonderful feeling of home, that I walked along through the aloes

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and laurel bushes, and other southern plants growing wild by the road-side, as if I had myself grown up on that soil."

"NICE, June.

"Veronica has found an artistic friend. He is called Vechi, and is a decorative artist; with us he would be called a house-painter. He is a fat man, and always holds his pencil in his mouth when ladies come. He is a kind of picture dealer, and has also some useless books on art, in which, however, a clever hen like Veronica now and then can pick up a good grain. He lives about eight minutes walk from us, and we visit him almost every day. Yesterday I told Veronica of a *bric-a-brac* shop; directly she wanted to go there. We bought various things; the works of St. John of the Cross—in Spanish—for a song. Oh! I am ready to lose my wits for joy at seeing Veronica able to walk, and taking pleasure in a thousand different things. Here we are taken for Spaniards, Veronica generally for my daughter."

"NICE, July.

"Madame de N. is here! Yes, we were even obliged to offer to take her to live with us for the first few days. In return, she embraces me over and over again, and says: '*Nous sommes comme les*

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colombes, nous ne pouvons vivre sans nous suivre,' and such like more. She has also tacked a "von" to my name, which every one repeats, and, however much I defend myself, the people sometimes address me as a marchioness, and sometimes a baroness. Lately our maid came and gave me that title; I rebuked her somewhat sharply, whereupon she thought she had done something very rude, and begged my pardon a thousand times. The people here have a good opinion of you Protestants; lately an old nun told me that, as a child, at the Christmas matins, she had seen such people, and they looked just like other people. She seemed to think that you must be a four-legged race, or a kind of medium between quadrupeds and human beings."

"The 20th August.

"To-morrow we are to go early to Cimelion, and spend the day there. There are there still many foundations of the old town; it is a beautiful lonely place, and the people make pilgrimages there to the Capuchin church. This is the first one in this country that gives me the impression of a church, it is purely Gothic. The groining of the roof might be bolder, but the whole is imposing; the choir especially is very beautiful, from above to below

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covered with frescoes, here and there occasionally inferior ones, but the beauty of the whole covers single defects. We think of going there to spend about eight days. Veronica wishes to paint the church in oil, and although we do not live much here in intercourse with others, yet I have a great desire for this total solitude. The whole character of the scenery is grand, untouched by the mind and hand of man. We may say that God made it, and that gives one a singular feeling of home and peace."

"This is the 12th of September, a splendid day. At ten o'clock we ate something warm at home, then we took meat, bread, and wine in our pockets, and went out. We are sitting here at a quarter of an hour's distance from our house, on a rock; round about us the sea is foaming with its mighty waves, and roars like thunder. Opposite to us, along the coast under the road, it has hollowed out great caves, that are quite fearful to look at. To-day was our first attempt to enter them, but we found other artists lodging there, so we climbed up on this spot. And Veronica always on before; oh, if you could only see her as I see her! You have only care and anxiety, but I have many a happy day, in which all that I have gone through appears

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like a heavy dream! While Veronica sketches, I alternately write and darn stockings, for we are in danger of soon going barefoot. The tide has now risen so high that on the road home I may have to play the part of St. Christopher.

So we remain out, as long as we can. Freedom is a very different thing from the cloister. Certainly along with Veronica, the latter is not so hard; but if I had to be shut up with only nuns, probably very uneducated, with no other chord in unison with them but those of the Office and the bells, I think the breath would soon leave me. Certainly a bad sign of my religious vocation, but I can't help it.

"In October.

"A bad hand, that I got in a singular manner, has kept me so long from writing. A week ago, Veronica wished to draw a palm tree, that was about twenty minutes walk from our house, and as that was so little exercise, and the donkey always wanted to get on, we went further, by an unknown road to the foot of Mont Albano, which is impassible for man and beast. But I was seized with such sorrow for the prisoners, who are so lonely and forsaken on the top of the dark mountain, that I felt compelled to go up, without knowing why, for

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entrance to the prison is allowed to no one; but I felt as if the mere sight of some other human creature than their jailor, would give them a moment's consolation. Veronica rode home, and I climbed up the hill, which was so steep, and with all its points, and sharp corners and stones, and its red earth, that seems coloured with blood, it looks like a place of martyrdom. I cannot tell you what a distressing picture I took away of it. The view is unbroken, and extends far over the sea and the Alps. But what good can it do to the poor prisoners, in their narrow rooms and their sorrow! I could not bear to look at it myself. I went home, and, in conclusion, I fell into a thicket of thorn bushes, that hurt my hand very much."

"The 29th of October.

"Our vagabond life is now at an end: we sit again within convent walls, and eat roast sparrows, and live one day like another. The good nuns received us with great jubilation. For our arrival they had cleaned and touched up everything as nicely as possible, and sorá Clara, who waits upon us, kisses our hands with joy, if we only look at her. Yes, after mourning comes joy, for as we left our house, our old Margaret howled piteously, and made her child cry too, and she

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smacked us so, that hearing and sight were gone. Oh! the view there was lovely. I looked for hours into the blue sea, and was never tired. Veronica often laughs at me, and says I am home-sick for freedom, and cites me so many advantages of our enclosure, that I must be silent. What pleases me is the sight of our painting room, and Veronica in it as artist. On the place where she now sits, I saw her in spring, lying ill, near death. I only wish you could see her now sitting there, looking into the colours on her pallet with her earnest eyes, as if she were investigating mysteries. Before her last toothache she made little *al fresco* attempts. The first and second head, as you may suppose, were fearful. The third is more human. It requires much practice and courage, but I do not like to disturb her pleasure. On the contrary, I encourage her. I rub down the colours for her, size the wall, and do all kinds of mason and plaster work; indeed I have arrived at some readiness in it. Certainly it looks queer enough. The Madonna is like a ruined knight, and the donkey has the air of an elegant young lady."

"December, 1836.

"To Antonie.

"A few days ago a nun died here quite

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suddenly. She was quite well and cheerful, but sometimes asked for a little time to herself, to prepare for confession: 'car c'est ma confession de mort.' The others laughed, for they knew that she was scrupulous. After this confession, however, while sitting alone in her cell, paralysis seized her tongue. It was the time of the evening recreation. She went to the superior in the community-room, and as she stammered so with her tongue, but smiled at the same time, the other thought it was a jest. Only when it continued, she saw how it was. She was taken to bed, received back her speech, and maintained it during Holy Communion and Extreme Unction. Then she became speechless again till the following evening, a few minutes before her death. She spoke aloud to the superioress, turned round, and was dead. Veronica and I had visited her an hour before, when she received the general absolution with perfect consciousness. Would to God that we might all some day fall asleep as calmly, without fear of the awaking! That brings me back to the chapter on convents, regarding which you lately misunderstood me. You consider the convent life the same as any other human institution. I hold that to be an error. The religious vocation is no common one, but quite peculiar. Where it exists it is holy and divine (of

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course the principal thing is that we must be clear about really having it), but God never lets proof be wanting. Read St. Mathew, xix., even though that may not relate to a life in community, such as the Church later adopted. If a man, to whom this peculiar vocation is granted, does not follow it he never will become that which God intended, because he will lose the particular grace, attached to the religious life, which is necessary for his salvation. He, however, who follows this divine call, may even go into a monastery which has become relaxed, owing to the greater part of its members being without a true vocation. Therein is notwithstanding his only certain way to heaven, because it is the way to which God calls him. You may apply this rule to this and other convents, which are not of very special edification, which in ours is hindered by the general roughness and superstition of the people of the country. Yet there are times when all that must give way. Before death all that can disturb them flies off like chaff, and at the death of this nun, I only thought how well it would be if God would grant us to die so peacefully and without fear of the awaking. Generally speaking, I have seen it to be one of the special graces of the convent life, to have a cheerful and happy death. I have seen many nuns die; here in the

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Sacré Cœur, and with the Sisters of Mercy; and among the more than sixty people I have seen die in the world there was not a single one so contented and cheerful in his last moments as these nuns. This is probably a preference given to them, like that of which the Apocalypse tells us in the description of the hundred forty and four thousand who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes, and sing the song that no other one can sing."

"January, 1837.

"To ANTONIE.

"Veronica tormented me so long till I mixed clay and made a cup for her. Further my artistic aspirations do not reach, I am better for darning stockings. Besides that I write, read, and study Spanish. Lately we read a very remarkable book, the life of Blessed Mary Margaret Alacoque, a nun of the Visitation, written by herself through obedience. It is full of incomprehensible, supernatural things, but the simplicity and originality of her nature appear everywhere through it. I attempted to read another book, but had to put it down again: 'Les Pensées de Pascal;' there runs a foreign air through these thoughts which I cannot breathe."

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"January, 1837.

"To PAULA.

"I wish that God would give you the grace of a real love of letter writing. For three months you have left my questions about the house of St. Anne's unanswered. You cannot have taken it for meddling, or any other thing but my simple love for all that concerns the house, a love that will follow me to the end of the world, if I should go so far. I am now engaged in writing out a little book of receipts I have collected for St Anne's, and Veronica is working at the altar cards. We are also busy making an antipendium—you know, the thing that goes in front of the altar. Veronica gave her old violet skirt for it; we hammered the frame together ourselves, from old pieces of lath, and Veronica exerted her art and made the design, and cut out what would have tried my eyes too much. You cannot think how pretty it looks, and costs really nothing. It is intended for the Blessed Virgin's altar. In the middle the name Maria, with a crown of stars over it, and vine leaves all round. All that is cut out of straw, and shines with a brilliancy, as if it were pure gold and silver. While I write, Veronica sits deep in the study of Spanish politics, and transfers her thoughts and views and military plans into the Spanish language. Waking and

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sleeping, she is taken up with Don Carlos and his marches, so that her heart often beats quite feverishly. I seldom read the Spanish news, the affair goes on so slowly, and the inhuman cruelties of the other side are too repugnant for me to follow the course of the history. In this house there lives another faithful adherent of Don Carlos, the old Countess S., a Swiss, who takes the newspapers only on account of the Spanish affairs. The best of it is that she understands nothing about it, and mixes people and places together, so that it is a pleasure to hear her. As often as I visit her, I lead the conversation on this topic, and tell her all kinds of inventions, which she mixes up with what she has been reading, into the most confused histories, and details them to the nuns with the utmost gravity."

"GRASSE, 8th June, 1837.

"TO ANTONIE.

"Your letters reached us the day before we left, and your anxiety and uneasiness about this journey frighten me myself, although I share the opinion of the doctor, who thinks this excursion will be beneficial to Veronica. I do not deny that her own pleasure at the idea of the journey has much induced me to sanction it. You only owe

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your wisdom to your distance, if you were in my place, it would be the same with you as with me. I cannot forget the long years of sickness, and when I see her taking pleasure in anything and how she expresses it, it touches and overcomes me so, that my eyes may be a little blinded to prudential considerations. I do not need to tell you this, for you have known, longer than I, how irresistible Veronica is. But do not fear. Our convent has given us letters to other houses; we go from one to another, and are everywhere well taken care of."

"Aix, 23rd June, 1837.

"To Paula.

"We intended to stay two or three days at St. Maximin, but instead of that we remained twelve days. First we could not tear ourselves from the magnificent church. The curé gave us all liberty to come and to stay as long as we liked, and after he had got us a lodging, with very good pious people, he opened to us the whole treasure of his church. This consists of a little subterranean chapel, with the alabaster tomb of St. Mary Magdalene and three other saints. You may perhaps put on as incredulous a face as I did at first, but the truth cannot be gainsaid. All traditions and

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ancient histories of Provence attest, that after the Ascension of our Lord, during the first persecution of the Christians, in which St. Stephen received the crown of martyrdom, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Martha, Mary the mother of Zebedee's children, Lazarus, Maximin, and others, were made prisoners in Jerusalem and put on board of an old vessel, with the intention that they should perish by shipwreck. God, however, preserved them, and guided the ship to Marseilles, where St. Magdalene first announced the faith. Lazarus preached the gospel there at the same time, and St. Trophimus, disciple of St. Paul, did so at Arles. This tradition of Provence is zealously maintained by the Sorbonne, and confirmed by all Bishops, as also by Rome. Magdalene left her brother and the others and retired to a cave in the rocks, about three hours' distance from the present St. Maximin, from whence the whole rocky mountain takes the name of the Sainte Baume, that is to say, the holy grotto. She lived there thirty years. You can have no idea of the solitude and the grandeur of the surrounding scenery. The whole mountain is like a single rock, almost without a cleft, without change or inequality in the style of its form. Its length is about two miles, its height 450 fathoms above the sea. The cave itself made an overwhelming im-

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pression on me, which I can compare to no other. It reaches seventy-three feet into the rock, and is ninety-four in breadth and thirty-six in height. A piece of rock at the background of the cave, was Magdalene's bed. Nothing is heard here but the separate waterdrops, falling from the rock to the earth, and the song of birds in the wood below. If our good priest ever wishes to become a hermit, I do not know a more solitary place in all the world. We went twice, the last time for a two days' retreat. We received Holy Communion there, and assisted at the holy sacrifice, quite near to the rock which had been St. Mary Magdalene's bed. I also went to the top of the mountain, to the spot from which the angels used to carry her up every day. Really they could have taken her to no more beautiful place to withdraw her soul from the earth. Everything around one appears so small. The towns look like flies in the distance. All vanishes in that immeasurable distance and height. Only the heaven above one, and in the distance the scarcely visible sea. I sat long alone up there upon a rock. I felt as if I were alone in the world; it seems to me I can never forget that place and that impression. From the last village to the Sainte Baume, one can only travel on mule-back, and from thence to St. Pillon (that is the name of

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the highest point), it is hardly possible to get on foot. I reached it amid falls and rising again. At the Sainte Baume we lived in the pilgrim's house, in which an old pious man lives with his sister, as guardian of the grotto. Our room had three pointed windows on one side; to the right we saw the grotto; to the left the distant view; and through the beautiful wood, down into the most luxuriant and many-tinted green I ever beheld. There seems no kind of tree that is not represented there. I gathered many medicinal herbs for St. Anne's in it, and I think they should be extra good for the sick."

"Arles, 4th July, 1837.

"To Antonie.

"On the 1st July we arrived here, and alighted at a heretical inn, where we, or rather our purse, was treated most heretically. We had, however, letters to the curé of the beautiful church of St. Trophimus, who immediately procured for us a lodging in the Augustinian Convent. The nuns are enclosed, it is true, but the gate opens for us whenever we wish, and so I write this scrap standing in the ruins of the beautiful old church of Notre Dame des Graces, a quarter of an hour's distance from Arles. We came here this morning. The path is very lonely, and leads past many little

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ruined memorial chapels. No other sound is heard but the twittering of the little birds in the trees, which here fills the air, and the murmur of a brook that flows near. The church is so singularly beautiful and remarkable that I made a hasty sketch of the plan; perhaps it may please you, so I enclose it."

"9th July.

"My letter has waited long. But the heat is so fearful it costs me a struggle to do anything. I should like best to live like fishes, in the water. Even Veronica says sometimes it is too much of a good thing. Oh, if you could only see her again! Certainly all is not nearly overcome, yet things are so as I could hardly have dared to hope during our journey to Nice, and our first stay there. Our present journey, and every spot, reminds me so much of that sorrowful time, when Veronica lay so ill, unable to take pleasure in anything, in spite of her natural interest for all that is great and beautiful. Now we go to most places on foot, where I then used to get out myself, to tell her about them. Yes, you would breathe again freely if you could only see her!"

"10th July.

"Veronica sits before me and draws, in the tran-

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sept of the Church of St. Trophimus; we sit thus for hours every day, and that is our quietest time. When we are at home, the good nuns feel themselves called upon to give us endless proofs of affection, which require much time and patience. They are the best pious beings in the world, but all so dreadfully stupid; our good nuns at Nice are real lights of the church beside them. Veronica always repeats the refrain of the Rev. Mother: '*C'est ça, que voulez-vous faire, le bon Dieu le permet.*' She is a person in whom, beyond her kindness of heart, no other human feeling is apparent. She is neither to be brought to astonishment nor horror; I have tried it in every way. They take the best care of us; our food is solid and wholesome, we have a cheerful room, and good beds. The poor nuns, on the contrary, have narrow, low cells, their food is bad and scanty, they sleep on straw, take many disciplines, and at the same time are merry and happy. They have charge of the sick in the hospital, which is separated from them by a door. Government torments them in return, and tries to circumvent them, so as to take away their daily bread. I wish we were rich, and could give something suitable to these poor people; their situation grieves one."

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After they returned to the convent at Nice, the uniformity of their life was interrupted in a manner deeply affecting to both their minds. The occurrence at Cologne, like a stone thrown into quiet water, spread its circles far over the surface of life, and would have drawn them into its depths, even if they had not had personally to do with it, owing to a wonderful concatenation of circumstances. A priest who lived near the scene of events, and with whom Gretchen corresponded, wrote her the result immediately after the blow had fallen. This letter, which reached Gretchen unusually quickly, was handed by her, without delay, to her confessor, who instantly forwarded it to Rome, where, as Gretchen was informed, it arrived before all other news, and was the cause of the messenger from the Prussian Government finding only closed doors when he came to give his explanation.

But while Gretchen was following these now general complications with anxiety, her old well-known fate awaited herself: another breaking up was in store for her.

Her father, who had never been ill before, was seized with an indisposition, which, although he soon got the better of it, was still thought serious, owing to his great age, and the great anxiety he

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expressed to see Gretchen. She resolved to return home. Veronica's recovery had progressed so far that Gretchen thought she could well entrust the care of her to other hands. What it cost her to do so she did not deny. "You know," she writes to Veronica's mother, "what sweetness there is for me in living with your child; how much I need her (even though she can spare me easier than you think). Yes, I have hardly thought but for her, and you know, better than anyone else, that the idea of leaving her pierces through my soul, and how gladly I would put it off in the distance, if right and duty did not warn me too impressively of the uselessness of all evasions. . . . . I dare not trust myself to my feelings, so as not to waver in my duty. Well, when the hour comes, I hope the help of God will not be wanting. He it is who takes away this comfort from me. One consolation, however, remains, that we shall all meet again, where there is no more parting and separation; this life is too uncertain for us to place our hopes therein."

In spring the two companions left Nice, travelling slowly to meet Veronica's mother, who at last had been able to come herself. This was a time in which Gretchen drank the cup of parting, filled with double bitterness, because it always became

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more apparent to her, that she alone felt it. Veronica had become every thing in life to Gretchen, who lost all in her, and went lonely back into the old desolation of her parent's house. But to the other the whole world seemed given back anew with her recovered health. She was going to meet a beloved mother, and it was natural to her joyous nature to submit herself cheerfully to the will of God, all the more as she expected later to live together with Gretchen again at home: a hope which the latter, with a wiser appreciation of circumstances, certainly did not share. We see how she felt by a letter from Milan, where she mentions how gaily and cheerfully Veronica enjoyed every thing, and was wrapped up in the beauties around her, gazing with her large earnest eyes, adding: "But I have enough to do to fly from my own nature, it knows how to find me every where, and the meeting is not pleasant."

At the lake of Como they parted. As long as her eyes could reach, Gretchen looked after Veronica, who was walking by her mother's side, and never once looked round. After three years she was now alone. In her then frame of mind, she could not endure the chattering company of the diligence, and at one of the next stations she induced the post-master to give her a little open

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carriage. So alone in the quiet night, with the starry sky above her, she crossed the Alps. She could have wished that the road and the night would never end, and that she might remain on that division line of the earth, to feel within her own soul the line of separation between her life hitherto, and that which lay before her. With the south, her little bit of earthly paradise vanished away behind her; and she was grieved not only for her departure,—far bitterer and harsher than ever, she tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge on her lips, sweetened by the companionship of no friend—she knew that Veronica could do without her, and that she remained solitary in her own soul, in spite of all her love and all her generosity. How had she not dreamed in happy hours of their future life together! Not only in mutual love, and mutual dependence on one another, but also in the deepest union, that of the spiritual and religious life. She had overlooked, that the peculiarities of man influence the conditions of his spiritual and religious life, and that to understand the secrets of a soul, it requires a deep community of spirit, such as did not here exist. How often nearly connected people live together as solitary as a hermit of Monteserrato, so near and yet unapproachable, because rocky clefts divide them.

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Neither custom, nor mutual conviction can fill up the gap between them, and love seeks in vain to throw her airy bridge across it!

Veronica in her bright pure nature went along her way by well-ordered steps, childlike and confident; a way that Gretchen found so innocent and simple, that when in France she had to help Veronica to put her confessions into the foreign language, she said that: "God Himself would laugh at such innocent confessions." Meanwhile she sank down discouraged on her dark and weary path, a thousand times doubting of its end, flying from the Church's means of grace, because she fancied herself unworthy of them, and Veronica thought, as she afterwards acknowledged to Antonie, that the conflicts of that soul were too grave for her to meddle with them, otherwise than by intercessory prayer.

If Gretchen, at their farewell, had been able to cast a glance into futurity, her feelings would have quickly changed. Their separation was in some degree symbolical, for two years later, Veronica without looking back, turned herself away from home, relations and friends, and entered the Order of the Sacré Cœur, while Gretchen, remained, as long as she lived, looking after her, and the gate behind which she had vanished.

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She came home, after a long and difficult journey, "weary, trembling like an old woman"—for an Italian doctor had injudiciously bled her during an attack of fever. She found her father well in body, but spiritually blunted, more timid and anxious than ever about his daily bread—her mother in her usual circuit between the Church and the market—and in their wider family circle misfortune and pressing care. Her weakness, and the unaccustomed severity of the German winter, prevented her from devoting herself in all activity to the poor and the sick, her circle of friends was diminished by deaths and changes, and uncheered and unalleviated, solitude closed in around her.

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CHAPTER X.

HER LAST YEARS AND HER DEATH.

GRETCHEN'S father drew her forth this time from the state of dull sorrow in which our last chapter left her. Though she tried more than ever to preserve a cheerful exterior, the instinct of his affection did not prevent him from observing the suffering of her mind, as also his eyes altered him her failed appearance, and without question or preamble he surprised her one day with the proposition that she should pay a visit to Paula. In her short announcement of it, we perceive the joyful excitement with which she prepared for the journey; she was soon on the road, but not before her father had extracted from her the promise "not to remain long away." She then travelled along the same road, that had formerly been the first station of her journey to the south. How wonderful was now the change from her

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previous discouragement and timidity! Then it was the greatness of the responsibility she had undertaken, which threw a shadow into the new world of life and love which lay before her; to-day the happy fulfilment of that responsibility, admired by all her previous opponents, was the solitary ray of light in her over-shadowed world!

In St. Anne's, meanwhile, a change had taken place. A sort of community of sisters had collected around Paula as their Superior, and this had given to the house a more important and conventual appearance, but at the same time had introduced many foreign elements into its earlier spirit. The spring time of St. Anne's was over. The fruit had set, but the design to ripen it fully under the protection of a Religious Order had not yet succeeded, owing to the opposition of Government. Still the dreams and plans of the two foundresses of the house had been fulfilled in other and more extended ways. After much difficulty, Paula had obtained permission, from the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, that the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola should be held in the little convent, and since from thence these exercises were spread throughout the country, the house could really in this sense be well called the first hut in the vineyard.

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However delightful this and much else was for Gretchen, however beneficial was Paula's unchanging constancy, still she missed exactly that, which at this moment, she most required, a self-proceeding, and self-directing activity. The little convent in its new form could no longer furnish her with this old cure; it had become a closed circle in which every invasion acted as an uncalled-for disturbance, and Gretchen was now obliged to look on passively, where she had before freely directed and given orders. Even her friendship with Paula could no longer stand forth in its full import, for fear of exciting jealousy, the universal intruder and underminer of peace. In such a situation, where to remain was painful, and going away was like a mountain on Gretchen's heart, bound here by so many fibres, Paula proposed that she should join the community, and fulfil the post of Mistress of Novices to the young girls who were qualifying themselves for teachers, and at the same time she should undertake the duties of Sacristan. It needed not that this proposal should be supported (as it was) by the greater part of the community, and also by a priest whom Gretchen highly respected, it found a sufficient advocate in her own heart. The thought that in this place, which she felt more like home than any other, she could realize somewhat of

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her oldest and dearest wishes, raised her spirits so high, that the arrow of warning her father had left with her at parting, as well as her own doubts whether she were really suited to this community or not, were for many hours forgotten; and although she did not consent, yet she hesitated to refuse. They were the less disposed to urge her, in that the time for the exercises above mentioned was drawing near, in which, they hoped, Gretchen would arrive at the desired decision. After a course of meditations, which she wrote down during a week's retreat, and in which a general confession engaged her conscience to a review of her whole life, the present doubt appears to have remained in the background as a thing already decided; for while her whole interior was reflected in these meditations, they make no allusion to any uneasiness caused by external circumstances, or to any determination that had to be arrived at. The only actual consequence of these days of retreat was, that she destroyed letters and papers, of which she says, in her meditations, "that her heart had never yet been able to part from;" for as she thought she could read, in the tortuous characters of her past life, that God willed to lead her into the deepest solitude, far from all human consolation and all connections that could approach her heart

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so she did not delay to sacrifice these remnants of earlier ties, as a token of her obedience.

The question of going or remaining had not yet come again under discussion, when Gretchen was spared the answer to it in an unlooked for manner.

Early one morning Antonie arrived unexpectedly at the little convent, to see Gretchen. Her appearance acted on the latter like an electric shock. Veronica and the times before the Italian journey, with all connected with it, and the feelings she had then with difficulty repressed, stood suddenly before her, but strongest of all the thought that God did not desire her separation from human ties, but had purposely sent to her this old companion of former days, with whom she had lived in such close intimacy and confidence, caused no less by mutual love and care than by mutual strife. Such intimacy can neither be voluntarily given nor taken away, and now that opposition of interests no longer disturbed the attractions of their hearts for one another, it unavoidably united them more closely when they met again. All this pressed so forcibly on Gretchen, that contrary to her usual custom, she drew her friend out of the surrounding circle almost as soon as she entered, took her to the chapel, and drew her down upon her knees beside herself. It was long before the rush of feelings in

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the hearts of these two former enemies could find words, but there they sat for many hours in the ante-room of the chapel, their hands in one another's, amid laughter and tears, forgetting all around them. Now and then one of the sisters looked in at the door, surprised at the unusual scene, and more than surprised. For to every one who did not know as well as Paula did, the past history of those who now met again, and who was not aware, as she was, of the strong impulsive nature concealed under Gretchen's quiet exterior, this stormy fervour appeared inexplicable, and also, as Antonie was a Protestant, exceedingly scandalous. In a word, their feelings were sufficiently changed to spare Gretchen the necessity of giving a negative answer to their former proposal, for Paula saw well that this was not the time to discuss it anew. A few days later, the appointed time for her departure came, and Gretchen left the place—everywhere marked with the best traces of her life—with a more certain feeling of farewell than she ever had before. The sentiment she had once expressed in a letter from Nice, that her love for the little convent should follow her to the end of the world, she also preserved to the end of her life. As far as she was able, she served the house even from a distance, and the drawing out of plans and sketches

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for an alteration in the house was one of her last occupations. That her connection with Paula remained unchanged considering the characters of the two, is needless to be told.

To show the effect that Antonie's return had upon Gretchen, and also the general spirit and tone of their friendship, we insert here some fragments of letters written immediately after their meeting.

"GIESSEN, Sept. 12th, 1839, 3 o'clock a.m.

"To ANTONIE.

"I am already prepared for the journey, and go away in the conviction, that we have not found one another in vain. Only tell me everything that displeases you in me, never seek to disguise the truth from me by deceit or evasion. You can say anything to me, I can bear all. You have equal right to expect the same from me. I will never trim my thoughts before you."

"WETZLAR.

"I am here in a new place. I went to the Cathedral, not from love of art, but to pray for us both. As we left Giessen early this morning, everything was still in twilight. Then it began to rain heavily, till a magnificent rainbow broke forth with the morning sun. I thought of the covenant

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that God had made with man, and of the one between you and me. Then I wept for the first time, and that did me good."

"COBLENTZ.

"In the diligence an old acquaintance was sitting beside me, and as I did not wish for his conversation, I pretended to be asleep, till I was attracted by the singing of a procession. Then he said: 'You have a happy temperament, Miss V., do you know that you have slept for four hours?' I never answered, but looked out and listened to the singing. You cannot imagine how wonderfully it sounded in the deep stillness of the place, and the evening darkness. It was a long procession of men, women and children, on pilgrimage to Bornhofen. I have often gone that way myself, the last time in much sorrow, and I went home quite comforted. If you come here next year, we shall go together. Oh it seems to me, that God has begun a new creation for you and me, and said even to us: 'It is not good for man to be alone!' I think of you only with joy and peace. Be not afraid that I am deceived in you, you are easier to know than I. What you consider in me to be strength and earnestness of my nature, are not my property. These are gifts which I owe to my Church, take me

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away from her, and her influence from me, and you will shudder at the weakness and poverty of my nature. This confession I owe to you and to truth. Remain true to me! that is my beginning and my end. One gets easily accustomed, but it is difficult to tear asunder, that always costs a piece of the heart. I have experienced much love in life, and have had to lay it all down again with sorrow, and the heart is not like a garment, that can be altered and turned. First it made me bitter, sick and weary, and then it made me resigned. Yes, with my will I have offered myself to God, ready for every sacrifice, and I renounced all human love. Then I saw you again, and your appearance was to me like that of the Angel to Abraham, who restrained his sword, that he might not slay his dearest one, with the assurance that God had only wished for his obedience. Do not ask if I shall always remain thus warm. So certainly as you remain true—and that you will be—so surely my heart shall know no change. Don't write to me, as if it were necessary to write 'sensibly,' write as you are, I do the same. I have grown old in the common-sense school of constraint, but I have been in no degree the better for it. I think it is good, even indispensable, to mortify oneself, and God lets no one want the occasion for it. The

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days, as they fall in our ordinary life, in which we act according to the will of God, are sufficient, if we use them rightly."

"COBLENTZ, 4th October, 1839.

"It is dull, damp weather, the clouds hang low, like a white covering over the earth. You cannot think what an influence this weather has upon me. It makes me quite dumb, and nobody can get me out of doors. Only I go to church, because I have promised God that no inconvenience or indolence shall keep me away from it. In to-day's Gospel are the words: 'Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you,' then I thought of us two, and in the Epistle, 'I have graven thee in my hands, and thy walls are always before my eyes.' So let us not be discouraged! Our will is caught in a thousand snares, and because there are so many of them, let us be afraid, and leave all to grace. That is, however, like the winter sun, shining on the mountain peaks and the tops of the cedars, but not piercing to the depths, nor melting the frozen earth. God demands our will, entirely and altogether, and for that He never denies us His grace a single moment, but we must put our hand to the plough, and not draw back before every difficulty. What am I saying all this

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to you for! Forgive me, I should rather apply it to myself. If a word of it suits you it is yours, otherwise pay no attention to it."

"You cannot think how our every day life oppresses me. One day like another, they fall like drops of rain, which the earth sucks up, and no trace remains. . . . . Yes so I am by nature, faint-hearted and indolent, and discouraged; be not deceived by my outward deportment. But if you know me entirely, will you then entirely love me? I should like to please you, and to be in reality what I am in appearance. . . . . You must help me. All that is difficult to me, I will offer up as intercession for you; I have tried it that way in days gone by, and it made everything very easy to me. In the eyes of God nothing is small; in ours however, common things may very easily become so, as soon as we cease to give them a right intention. Life becomes then only weary, forced, machine-work."

She had only returned a short time to her domestic routine, when misfortune again drew her out of it. Her old complaint of the eyes took suddenly such a serious turn, that blindness was feared, and as there was no skilful optician in the

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neighbourhood, but there was one at Cassel, where Antonie's family resided, Gretchen's parents gladly assented to the proposal of the former, that their child should go there to be under his care. This illness, tedious and full of relapses, detained Gretchen at Cassel for long periods at different times. It would lead us too far, if we were to describe more nearly the circumstances of her stay there; only to denote the sphere in which she mostly found herself, we shall mention the sincere and cordial friendship which lasted till her death, between her and the family of the brothers Grimm. It would be difficult to enumerate all that she did at this time for Antonie's family, then grievously visited by sickness, death, and many misfortunes, so that her remembrance yet lives in it, like the lingering ray of a star that has set. For her picture we require no more traces of self-sacrificing fidelity, and we will only dwell upon one thing, which was here quite new to her, she was living among Protestants!

In this place, where people were only accustomed to see the borderers of Catholicism, her appearance, which bore so strongly the impression of its home, was so striking that some one excused his fixed stare at her by saying that she looked so very different from other people. Her religious estrange-

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ment did not in any way disturb her own conduct; so that, for example, when the doctor forbid her to go to Church, she said her prayers for mass on her knees in the ante-drawing-room, without letting herself be disturbed by the family passing in and out. Always and everywhere the complete, natural, unobtrusive Catholic, who practised no other polemics but just to be—what she really was—she caused many prejudices to disappear. Minds that understood her attached themselves to her cordially and perseveringly, and even such as were fondest of controversy, or those to whom her manner was strange and uncomfortable, let her pass, as an accomplished fact. Jests, which were not wanting, she took up as innocently and gaily as they were intended. If they threatened to take a more serious turn, she knew how to dispose of them either playfully or in a still better way. Thus she once replied to the question, how it was possible that she could say the rosary with unwearied devotion? "If you love anyone very much, are you ever tired of telling him so?"

Less to be expected, than that she should avoid these discussions, which were generally only introduced to give piquancy to the conversation, was it that, notwithstanding her convictions, and the vigour with which she adhered to them, she avoided,

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even with a kind of fear, all attempts to influence others, or to make converts to Catholicism. We may say that nature and experience both kept her from doing so. Partly she was too proud of her Church to try to serve it by busy officiousness; partly, she had felt God's secret working too much in her own heart, not to respect it in the hearts of others. So it is perfectly in accordance with her character, that she should have conscientiously taught a Protestant child entrusted to her family its Catechism, and long before she herself came into special communication with Protestants, she expressed herself thus on the subject: "I am of the opinion, that it is allowed to no man to interfere with the grace of God, and His guidance. He alone knows the means and the way, and the right time. But all mere human interference can only bring human fruit." A circumstance at the sick bed of Antonie's mother gave occasion for her to repeat these sentiments. She describes it thus to a friend in the faith: "Yesterday I thought that our dear mamma's last night was approaching. The wound to which she owes the continuance of her life had healed, and fever and unconsciousness followed. Then I was seized with a desire; I laid under her pillow my particle of the True Cross, and at the same time I promised something to our dear Lord

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upon the Cross, and imagine our joy? About two o'clock at night the wound opened again. The doctor is very much surprised at this fortunate turn. . . . If the improvement only continues! The thing has made an impression upon Antonie, who alone knows about it. . . . . Oh, pray with all your household that God would glorify Himself in our holy faith in this family, and do not cease to call upon the intercession of our Blessed Lady." But when this improvement really became a turning point in the illness, and her friend wrote that Gretchen should follow up the impression it made upon Antonie, Gretchen replied: "How can you so misunderstand me! Do you know my opinion of the conversion of those in error so little, that you can imagine I would even force *one* truth upon them? Faith is a grace, and only to be begged from God in prayer, that is all that I can do for Antonie, or any other Protestant. How could I ever think of forcing on her the belief in nothing tangible, such as is this cure by means of a relic!" Yet the temptation to depart from her rule in Antonie's case, was very strong. As for the latter, she was ten years older than Gretchen, belonged in her youth to a period of the deepest decline of her own Church, and repelled alike by the dryness of rationalism, and the subjectiveness of pietism, the

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picture of a church rose before her, as she found it in the lives and writings of the Saints, built up in the spring time of orders and convents, and the power that it once had over the souls of men; a Church surrounded by the earthly, and disappearing amid the heavenly glory of art and poetry, a Church which would calm all distress, all misunderstood longing of the heart, to which every pious Catholic, every crucifix, every little place of prayer by the way-side directed her, but yet a Church which always seemed to draw back the more, behind that which her eyes beheld, the more she sought after it. This tendency had given to the circle of her Catholic friends the impression about her, that she was only held back by a thin veil, woven out of a few threads of mistaken impressions and Protestant darkness, which would soon be dispelled by the sunlight of Catholic truth. How far Gretchen shared this opinion we cannot say, for she refused to enter into the question with others, saying: "that it was impossible for her to speak to others regarding the interior of a soul, which was so near to her as Antonie's." But from what she said to Antonie herself, it appears that a condition, thus wavering between the door and the corner, seemed to her more dangerous than hopeful, and one in which by dint of seeking so long after His Church, she might

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lose out of sight the Lord and Master of the same. For to Him and Him alone and persevering prayer, she referred over and over again the soul groping in uncertainty. We will let her speak herself: "So you are reading 'Möhler's Symbolism?' I do not understand how you could think I might expect too much from that? That would require more credulity than I possess. For I know by my own experience how little one obtains by the road of speculation. Perhaps somewhat for the understanding, but nothing for the faith. *That* we can only have by prayer, but not to-day and to-morrow, and then leaving off, but *persevering*, and if the soul is prepared, it is often the very smallest thing that God makes use of. Thus Möhler, or any other Catholic book, may open the door of the Church, without our running any risk of being struck by the words: 'he that entereth not in by Me, enters in like a thief!' But you go round about the Church, look at it, admire it, and blame it. I would not interrupt your course, even if I could, because it is given to no human being to see through the ways of God, in the guidance of a soul, and all interference might be a mistake. Only hold firm to what we believe in common, the redemption through Christ from sin and guilt, and let us daily

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pray that this faith may always gain new life within us."

And another time: "Oh, Antonie! let us not look back, so as to lose courage: always before, to gain it anew, and, like a child, to begin each day at the beginning again. I have been so often comforted by the gospel, where the Lord is so gracious to the workmen, who only came in the evening, that He made them equal to those who had toiled the whole day through. You once said I finished off much with confession. Dear Antonie, if you cannot employ this means, hold fast to the belief in the redeeming merits of Christ, and if even that is not firm and active in you, cease not to pray for it. I do so every morning for you and all whom I love. In this faith alone is deliverance from the labyrinth of doubt, and all distress about our sins. Oh, do you think then, all is over with the mere acknowledgment of one's sins? That would certainly be an easy termination. Let me be silent. I know the state in which you are, by experience, and that no man can help one, with every love, and devotedness, and reasoning, out of that abyss of darkness and dryness, and discouragement! We are all like earth without water, if the grace of God does not make us fruitful. . . . . But whether it is easy or difficult to you, pray before the Face

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of God, and that you may find Him, then you always pray aright, and no word is lost."

She soon experienced herself the truth, that no prayer, such as hers, was lost, but rather sprang up, like a scattered seed, where the sower least expected it. Although she said nothing of it to Antonie or to others, yet her later expressions show that it cost her painful anxiety to see her friend continuing in a religion, which, in her opinion, was unable to give peace. Neither curiosity nor sympathy ever induced her to make nearer acquaintance with that religion. It was far from her nature to busy herself with abstract things, and especially in this case, where her Church had forestalled her decision. She believed her in this as in everything. Yet she was of too open a mind to deny the manifestations of the Kingdom of God even outside her Church. She was too true to herself and to others, and so the nearer acquaintance of pious evangelical Christians might have come to influence her opinions.

Thus she expresses herself about a Protestant, who was married to one of her Catholic friends: "Yes, it is true, and you are right, A. is an excellent man! the more I know him the more I see it. He came yesterday and sat till mid-day. He might have sat there all day, speaking and being

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silent, as he does, I would not have been tired. Yes, he is a pious man, and the deepest I ever knew. His piety rests on a solid basis." Such circumstances may have awakened trains of thought in her, in consequence of which she says: "If I could only tell you what has been moving me all this time! But if I tried to put it in words they would say something different from what I mean. I have arrived at a view that makes me happy, and comforts me about you and many Protestants whom I know. I have prayed long over it, and hope it is no view that can separate me from my Church, although it may separate me from many of my Catholic friends. And yet, if we can calculate with the faith, as with another thing, my love for the Church is not only deeper and wider, but purer than before. No, the Church is a very different thing from what we take to market. I say this to you because my heart is so full, and I wish you could know how I feel. And, yet how little my writing can explain it!"

The more her inward world expanded and surprised her by the depth of its richness, the more did her exterior world narrow itself, and distrust and blame become louder. What she had experienced among the Sisters of St. Anne's she now found in the wider circle of her Catholic friends. She writes

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about it to Paula: "Think of my loneliness here. —I go to no one, and like best when I am little visited. It is no virtue, but a deep feeling of loneliness and solitude that comes over me in the midst of others. The people here are all good; but that I have been among Protestants, and that I like them, makes the others suspicious of my faith and opinions; and if we converse about it, the best of them stand before me like notes of interrogation, and that oppresses my heart, and takes away all desire to speak or to hear. But, oh that it might please God, that my heart had no sorer spot than this!"

Though different in form, yet similar in inward character, under a quiet surface, her present fate was a repetition of her convent experiences, that she was not to be supported by human sympathy, but to stand alone. At the same time it was a yet deeper cut of the trying sword under which she had to live, laying bare the thoughts and feelings of her solitary heart. For to humble oneself under the hand of God, and to bear the consequences of one's own "dream," is far easier than to be despised by the world, and wounded by friends in our most sacred feelings. Her soul might then run near to the danger of despising others with indifference, or become embittered. Yet a different feeling is expressed by Gretchen in the following letter: "I

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was meanwhile overcome by a very sorrowful feeling at the secret loosening of all ties, and the true reason of it, and the distrust of all old friends of my own faith. I once sat down to write to Apollonia; the letter is still lying there; I am doubtful if I shall send it. It is so hard for me that they suspect my faith, and, however I may express it, I should expose the others, only in a different way. May God deliver us from the dangers of our time, and its party spirit and ill nature."

In a letter to Antonie she says: "How strange! I have such a firm conviction that it lies in no man's hand to direct another's faith, and, therefore, I never meddle with another except by praying for them, and yet this appearance lies so strongly on me." It was a singular irony that, in contradiction to such suspicions, caused her to pass, in the eyes of some, for a dangerous Ultramontane. Thus, when a Protestant tailor came to take up his quarters in the little lodge of the house, near the street, the Protestant clergyman sent for the tailor's wife, to warn her against Gretchen's influence; and the same thing was done by a high government official to one of his underlings, who often came to the house. Perhaps there rested on her the reflection of the time when she herself was seized by party spirit, and spoke out and argued with others. But

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as she owes it to God alone that she should now be contradicted, she wishes no one ever to defend her, and for whatever happens to her, she has deserved it doubly and threefold!

A journey to a watering-place, on account of her returning affection of the eyes, was made by her in the company of Antonie. As it brought her into the neighbourhood of places and people whom she loved, she looked forward to it with a kind of childish pleasure; but it ended sadly. The first shadow in those bright days was cast by the death of Clemens Brentano, the old friend of her youth, whom she had seen again, shortly before his last illness, in the old affection and confidence. But life had separations yet more bitter for her than death. By a perfectly innocent mistake on her part she fell out with a family, whom she had been attached to most faithfully for many years, where she had been as intimate as a child of the house. It grieved her very much that they seemed to give her up so easily, without enquiring more closely; but all the more did she take to herself the counsel she had given to another under similar circumstances: "Let go what we cannot keep, and remain true to yourself!" Silent, without any attempt to warm again the atmosphere which had cooled to her, she let all misconceptions pass over her, and wrote,

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shortly before her death: "At —— hardly any one now knows my name; but it does not matter, I do not forget them, and share from my deepest soul everything that befalls them." To remain true to herself, was, with her, to remain true to others.

Another hard blow met her at the end of the summer. Antonie, who had lived with her since the death of the mother of the former (she died in Gretchen's arms), now left her, though Gretchen hoped she would have "lived and died with her." Although she knew the reasons, arising from Antonie's family affairs, she did not fail to see that these reasons were greatly strengthened by Antonie's dislike to living at Coblentz, and, in a word, that here, also, her love had not met with its return. No sign of how deeply she felt it, no reproach came over her lips. Warm and kindly, and cheerful, after her fashion, she only stole often away to the neighbouring wood, where a cross stood between the lofty fir trees. No one with her but her faithful companion, blessed Thomas à Kempis. There she spent many an hour, and had, as she said, a hermit's pleasure in the little squirrels playing at her feet, in the flight of the wild pigeons, the flying clouds, and the dark cross cutting into the blue sky above her. The following expressions, written long after, shed a ray of light on what then

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was passing in her soul: "I desire to possess nothing more exclusively in the world. Now no friend will be unfaithful to me any more, and my heart is at peace! I do not owe this to my own intelligence, but to the never-ending goodness of God, who suddenly turned back my soul from a yawning precipice, and brought my mis-directed thoughts again to the light and to the right path."

Little remains to be told of the following years of her outward life. At home again, rather weakened than benefitted in health by all she had gone through, she managed the housekeeping, as far as her mother would leave it to her. She took charge of the children of her beloved sister (who suffered under many trials) with zeal, and true to the words "those who love us are strict," so faithfully and regardless of herself, that they thank her for it all their lives. She adopted one little niece, and took the eldest herself to Aschaffenburg, to place her at the school of the English Ladies. Her stay there, among dear old friends did her so much good, that she writes to Antonie about it: "I feel like a Southlander, who has spent his life in the North, and now returns to breathe the air of his home. Among the people here there is such deep piety,

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and such a gentle feeling to others. With that I intend no reproach to the pious people at home; but here religious life is like a quiet river, disturbed by no opposing currents, there it is quite different.' She withdrew herself from no demands that life might make upon her. She herself calls this life a "busy idleness, where amid kitchen, market, and running up and down stairs, she could often hardly get time to visit a poor sick person; her days like falling raindrops, sucked up by the earth, and leaving no trace behind." Her more distant friends were not wanting in attempts to withdraw her from this condition for a longer or shorter period. Some invited her to Berlin, others to a journey to Belgium, others again even to Rome. "But she had other things than travelling to think of!" The uniformity of her life was broken by the illness of both her parents, which, although they fortunately recovered from it, still alarmed Gretchen out of her previous security, into a state of anxiety, which did not permit her any more to go far from home. "I place him," she writes of her father, "every morning and every evening anew into the hand of God, and with my will I accept all that He ordains concerning him, but my heart and my whole soul is so bound up in him, that even this costs me a great struggle, and yet what

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is this compared to the last when it comes!" To these simple trials which came in the course of nature there were added others, to discuss which is out of our limits,—trials which not only brought a severe shock to her own feelings, but which kept her in ever-returning anxiety, to prevent her parents from feeling them. All the dark clouds that had ever hung on her domestic horizon, and had often made the leaving home easier for her than seemed compatible with her family affection, gathered together always in a more threatening manner, and weighed most on her, as she was more capable than those most nearly concerned, of appreciating and feeling them. By intelligence, affection, and capability of suffering, she was the moral bearer of all the adversities of her family. Thus surrounded by depressing and painful circumstances, her activity confined to the smallest arrangements, without having any person to whom she could say more than "the most every-day words," her position seemed well enough adapted to let her fall into her natural melancholy. Yet an expression of feeling regarding these trials ends with the words: "'God wills it so,' I say to myself in all sorrow, and in every case, and then I can go on again! Yes, I do not know how I appear so cheerful, and yet it is no deceit. As long as I am alone I feel the

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whole trouble, but whenever I go to my parents all disappears, it is a grace which God gives to me for their sakes; what my own heart suffers, I will gladly bear, if my parents only are spared." She often found that "faithfulness even in the smallest duties brings a deep peace, and that however obscure, narrow, and miserable life may be, if it is performed for God's sake, and not for necessity, He is so merciful and rich in rewarding, that we hardly feel the daily miseries, but can be happy and cheerful. To give oneself up to God, to follow Him, wherever He leads, is the only thing to be desired. All else is only to seek and to find dispeace."

Single portions of this "small" life can only be interesting because she herself is reflected in them like the light in the water-drop, and we refer the reader, who recognises importance even in little things, and who is not weary of following her in all her ways and feelings, to the letters contained in our Appendix. Those addressed to Antonie show at the same time that Gretchen remained unchanged in love and confidence for her; she did not measure other natures by her own rule. "What is all love if it does not endure," she might well say, and could add, "if it does not deny itself"; for, as Antonie desired to come back to her, she ad-

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vised her friend most seriously and expressly to remain where she was, because her present position was more advantageous for herself and others. The time would come again, when they might say, "Here I am, or here you are." This time also did come, and Gretchen had a couple of as happy weeks as the company of a beloved friend could afford. Nevertheless Antonie found her very much changed, for while she grudged every minute she spent with her friend, she did not now allow herself to be hindered in the smallest degree in her household duties, nor in her walks to the poor and sick,—she went smiling on her way, though the other grumbled. It was not that the warmth of her feelings had diminished. When Antonie was going away, Gretchen packed and arranged everything for the journey, without a complaint, but her face caused her sister to say: "Your going away is breaking Gretchen's heart." It was only that she exercised a firm discipline over herself in all her ways and actions, a discipline which at the same time she subjected to strict obedience to her parents. As, for example, when her daily visits to a consumptive patient were disagreeable to them, she immediately curtailed them, and adapted herself without resistance to all her mother's whims. Certainly the source and maintenance of this dis-

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cipline was in her own will, but she was also guided in it by her confessor, under whose obedience she had placed herself.

She and Antonie had parted with the understanding that the latter was to return in spring, and not to leave her any more. But God willed it otherwise. The presence of beloved and confidential persons is somewhat paralyzing. In it one can neither experience the deepest sorrow nor the highest joy, neither the whole pain of God's absence, nor the blessedness of His approach, and it was ordained to Gretchen altogether and entirely to experience what is contained in one of her favourite quotations, which we have put as motto on the title-page of this book. God had taken away from her all that could keep her from Him, in her own being, will, and attachments, and He had prepared her for Himself, in solitude and self-denial. Now came the time for fulfilment of the last of the three petitions, where, taken from herself, she could *feel* that she belonged alone to Him.

In this last period of her life, she entered as by a golden door, surrounded by all the glory and devotion of her Church, into one mind and one road with many thousands. She joined the great pilgrimage to Trèves. Unfortunately the accounts she then wrote to different friends, full of what

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she experienced, are no longer to be found, and we can only remark, that these pilgrimages—she made the journey twice over—were intended as penance for herself and intercession for her living and deceased friends. We see in what degree she was carried away beyond herself, in the fact that she, whom a moderate walk used to tire, went on foot the thirty hours of walking distance (30 wegstunden) from Coblentz to Treves, in three days, and on arriving at the end—the pilgrims went straight to the Cathedral—she still preserved freshness and strength to receive the impression of it in all its fulness. From that time forth, we observe in her a kind of more exalted frame of mind. Not that she tried to keep up the impression she had received by seclusion and contemplation, or gave way to any visionary feeling; on the contrary, like a warrior returning to the battle after a fresh drink, she came back to her daily routine from these inspiring heights with greater strength and joy, and renewed severity towards herself. She would now have exchanged her "closed and uniform life with no other in the world." If once, before her journey to Nice, she felt frightened and oppressed by the thought that "the end might perhaps be put off for eight or ten years," now, after these ten years she finds "that God cannot be thanked enough for life,

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for each new day in which we can give Him back somewhat we have robbed Him of. Even though it is all patchwork, God is so gracious to even the smallest little grain of penance poor Love may sow, that He waters it with His holy Blood, and cherishes it for eternity." She also "does not believe she will soon die," for she "must be put through, yet in quite a different way, to learn to live entirely in 'God wills it so,' and to become quite another being."

That she did not let this "through putting" be wanting on her part, we see by the following "rule of life," which was found among her papers, and to keep which could not have been easy for one of her lively, impulsive character:

RULE OF DAILY LIFE.

"6 o'clock.		Rise.
6 to 7	„	Morning Prayer, Meditation.
7 to 8	„	Dressing, tidying the room, breakfast.
8 to 9	„	Holy Mass. Household work.
9 to 10½	„	Work, writing, going out, the poor.
10½ to 11	„	Spiritual reading.
11 to 12	„	Kitchen, or other work.

Dinner, till 2 o'clock free time.

2 to 4	„	Work, writing.
4 to 5	„	Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and free time.

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5 to 8 o'clock,	Work, necessary outgoing, the poor.
8 to 9 „	Supper, free time.
9 to 9½ „	Evening prayer, the point of meditation for next day."

Even the attentive observers of this hidden soul who lived nearest to her, have little to say regarding the framework of self-denial which she imposed on herself. Still it appeared strange to them that she, who used formerly to miss their agreeable society, now drew back from it, and studiously mingled with good and pious people who were greatly beneath her in intelligence and education. Sharp and impulsive to those who knew her more nearly, the state of her mind is shown by an apparently unimportant trait. At her separation from Veronica she had taken with her a few small articles belonging to her friend, "which were connected with so many recollections," and when Veronica entered the convent, she quietly retained them. But now, when she heard a conversation about unjust goods, and that they ought to be given back, it occurred to her that she also had no right to these possessions, and so she sent to Veronica's relations a little picture that her friend had painted, and which they both had helped to frame, a smelling-bottle, and a little corkscrew. The thing was small, but the sacrifice was

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great; they were the dearest possessions that she had. If we put her mode of life, aud her interior dispositions, as these tokens show them, together with the wishes of her early days, we may well say, that in the midst of her filial duties she built herself a cell, which in sclf-denial, discipline and humble concealment, though not in actual solitude, may be compared to a cloistral one. Or rather, we may say with greater truth, that He, to seek whom she ealry went forth, whom, among His acknowledged spouses she had vainly sought to attain to and to hold, He Himself had built for her this cell, in which she remained like a child in a dark room, who sees the light of the Christmas tree shining through the chinks of the door. Thus, through all the sorrow and the throng of life, she saw the light of blessed eternity always breaking in upon her more bright and overpowering. She "cannot express how she feels, she cannot understand how He pours forth His sweet, heavenly graces in such a poor frail vessel, and she knows only one thing, that His gracetand mercy are above all measure!

Meanwhile, the decline in her health, which showed itself chiefly in a general weakness, increased every day. Her friends might be the more easily deceived as to the gravity of her state,

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as she herself took no notice of it. The distress among the poor during the long hard winter of 1844-45, was unusually great, and allowed her no rest. She would rather have sunk down through weakness, than not personally taken care of her poor, on the days when coals or potatoes were given out. In particularly urgent cases, when she knew of no other means—for it was "sorely against the grain" for her,—she went "begging from house to house, and timidly made many curtsies and explanations," or she "sat from morning till night like a clerk with a pen in her hand, writing to Counts, Excellences, and Burgomasters." At this time she became acquainted with the family of General von Thile; how it came about we shall allow Gretchen herself to describe; and although she took the first step towards it with repugnance, yet we shall see that she derived much pleasure and recreation from it, and she felt the charm of coming once more in communication with people of education like her own.

On the 16th December, 1844, she wrote to Antonie:—"Now I will tell you a circumstance to make you laugh. Yes, dear, yesterday eight days, between twelve and one o'clock, I, Gretchen, was sitting on the sofa beside Frau Generalinn von Thile, While I write I must laugh, and while I

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was there I took great pains not to think of you, or I should have laughed then. Hear how it happened. You know the poor baker's people, with the eleven children, when we lent them the thirty-four thalers there remained still owing forty-six thalers to a man who put the affair into the hands of a Jew, and they were to be sold out last Thursday. I had no money, so I could think of nothing else to do but to go and beg for them, and as her Excellency was particularly against the grain to me, I thought that our good God required of me that victory over myself, and that He might make His blessing depend upon it. In a word, I made myself as nice and neat as possible. The man-servant who had to announce me, began to laugh when he saw my big, black bonnet and spectacles, and that increased my consternation. However, everything went very well; she and her daughter were very kind, so much so that I promised to go there some evening, and they promised on their side that I should be quite alone with them. After such graciousness and tenderness, I walked off with two thalers, and really that luck-penny brought me a blessing. On Wednesday morning I had my forty-six thalers together, and you can fancy my pleasure. Unless something had prevented me yesterday, I would have gone there in the evening."

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She really made up her mind, in the first days of the new year, to pay her promised visit, and she wrote the same evening to Antonie: "If it had not been so dreadfully warm I should have stayed longer. They are good, simple people. I promised them to come often, and I will do it. One can really talk to them. I felt quite at home with them when they spoke of Clemens, of the Grimms, and many other people I knew. In that way it is easy to find a road into my heart." From this time she was often visited by the daughter of the Generalinn, Marie von Thile, who used to sit for hours on a little stool at Gretchen's feet, and was attached to her with great affection. This was probably the last recreation that came to her from outside; but neither this, nor her always increasing care for her poor and sick prevented her from taking to herself the children of her sister, when the latter became ill, and she was obliged "to do all very gently, that her parents might not be annoyed." In the meantime she herself broke up, and was obliged to remain for a time quiet, and to keep at home. It seemed, however, that then she heard the secret voice of God only more clearly. "Could I only explain to you," she writes to Antonie, "with what love and mercy God helps me at this time, which

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seems outwardly so melancholy and forsaken, but I can put it into no human words."

In a state of such high devotion it might seem natural that particular friendships should disappear or be cast aside, like shoes before a holy ground. She, however, writes to Antonie: "Oh, how strangely you look at my happiness, as if it were a locked-up treasure, or, I do not know how, as if you did not belong to it yourself. I cannot say much about it, but hold this fast, if it comforts you:—There is nothing that moves me, no prayer in my heart, nor which my lips pronounce, in which you are not comprised. I can ask nothing for myself alone, it is always for Antonie and for me, even in my dreams. I will not say that that should bring you any especial blessing, but only that you may know that I adhere to you with the same fidelity."

So hastened, to return to our earlier simile, the two streams in which her being had been poured into life, with fuller and purer waves, to the ocean of Eternal Love.

The spring time, the old solstice of her fate, and the "dear, and holy Easter feast," came on. "How much grace and blessing," she writes to Paula, "the holy Church pours forth in these days upon her members! To-morrow is the beau-

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tiful day when Holy Communion is carried to the sick. My whole soul rejoices at the thoughts of it." The same attraction that had drawn her away from her childish games, accompanied her all her life through. "Go often before the most Holy Sacrament," she said to a troubled soul; "there is to be found more comfort and peace than in any other place in the world." The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar was—as Paula says—the Sun of grace, the Magnet, to which Gretchen was attracted. How often have I heard her singing low to herself, the *Pange lingua gloriosi*, and caught the words—

"All my life art Thou, without Thee I must die!
All my food art Thou, without Thee, misery!
All my joy art Thou, sole Solace of my life!
All my peace art Thou, apart from Thee is strife!"

Holy Thursday of this year fell at the end of March, and was a bitterly cold day. Gretchen, however, was "so full of gladness and delight, that she felt neither rain nor snow," and accompanying the Blessed Sacrament from door to door, she repeatedly knelt on the pavement. In these hours, while her soul was absorbed in the Fountain and Lord of all Life, she prepared herself for taking leave of all earthly things.

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On coming home, she felt unwell enough to send for the doctor, at her sister's request. He did not know exactly what to think of it; he advised greater rest, but allowed her to go to church, where, on the following day, she met with an agitating scene. A woman in a confessional near to her was seized with convulsions, and as Gretchen, at a sign from the priest, led her out, she fell down in a fit of epilepsy. To assist her was Gretchen's last work of charity.

On Easter morning her illness had increased so much, that she addressed to Antonie some directions about her will, beginning with the words:— "Dear Antonie! I do not know what our good God has in store for me. Man can overcome much weakness, but there is a measure to it, and when that is full, the soul departs. I feel myself very weak, perhaps it may pass over, but perhaps not." Yet she kept up on the two holidays of Easter week, and went to church. On the Tuesday, however, she told the faithful old friend of the house, to whom they always turned in trouble and difficulty, and never in vain, Lieschen S—, that she felt ill and must go to bed. Her friend came, and from fidelity and necessity left her no more, for an overflowing of the Rhine, such as had never been known in the memory of man, cut off the commu-

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nication to such a degree, that to enter their small house which stood within a court, they had to be carried to and fro by strong men.

Gretchen's sister, ill herself, could hardly get once to her; only the good Sister Cécile, the Infirmarian of the Hospital, who had been attached to Gretchen from early youth, found means to make her way to her over walls and boards. Yet no one, not even the doctor, thought that danger was near, and when Gretchen asked them to write to Antonie, they confidently tried to dissuade her from bringing Antonie on such a long journey, when there was no danger. Gretchen, remembering the promise she had given to the former, to call her if she became dangerously ill, persisted in her wish, adding: "Oh, if I only whistle she will come!" and with the restlessness of sickness, and regardless of time, she expected Antonie every time the door opened. It was her last disappointment. Meantime the water kept rising higher, and scarcely had her parents and their confidential friend taken refuge in the upper floor, when it burst into the house, and her dear old friend, "the proud Rhine," rushed and foamed under the floor of her room.

She grew rapidly worse, and they sent word of it to the priest, but he did not venture to

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bring the Blessed Sacrament, on account of the water; however, he gave her Extreme Unction. Surprised, she asked if things had really come so far with her; then she prepared to receive that holy sacrament with visible joy, and made her confession with all recollection and with a distinct voice.

From that time she lay, letting them do what they pleased with her, her hands clasped, her eyes fixed on a Crucifix, without speaking a word, quiet, without fear, and without pain. She was in the same state, when on the third day the water had subsided so for, that the Holy Communion could be brought to her without danger. She received the Holy Viaticum with evident consciousness, and then remained speechless and quiet, till early on the following morning, the 2nd April, when her breath grew fainter and fainter, and ceased at two o'clock.

Sister Cécile said that she had never seen an easier and more peaceful death. And so, noiseless and hidden, as in all the difficult passages of her life she remained even in her last. We must be silent here regarding the grief of her old parents, her sister, the children, the poor, who soon filled the house with their lamentations, the sorrow of Antonie, who, in all haste—detained on the roads

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which the water had made impassable—yet came too late, and the mourning of her friends far and near.

A life such as Gretchen's could not be uprooted without leaving behind it deep gaps and painful wounds. Her death was an unexpected blow! Considering the great age of her parents, her friends expected that their span of life would naturally have given place to hers. And yet a calmer observation may discover in her existence a true completion, a connection between its parts, and a uccess even in its failures—in a word, the work of God on and in her; and that, though not in form, yet perhaps all the more in spirit, He had accepted her will and her desire. Yes, the "patch-work" of her life appears to us like the detached portions of the way of the Cross winding up a rock, and all her fruitless attempts and disappointments are so many gleaming stations, at which our Lord extended to her what the Church symbolically expresses at the clothing of a nun—the unrobing her of the world and of herself. He, the Lord, had allowed her to *live up to* the vows which she had not been permitted to utter,—in holy chastity, in spiritual poverty, in ecclesiastical and filial obedience. He had enclosed her, and all her life, in the ring of His merciful fidelity, and suffered her, His chosen

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bride, prepared only by Himself, to close her life under the veil of humble concealment, in the literal following of His own example; *for she was in her parents' house, and was subject unto them.*

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APPENDIX.

CLEMENS BRENTANO TO GRETCHEN.

Ratisbon, at Canon Diepenbrock's,
2nd of April, 1833.

My Good Gretchen,

Although in your two last letters you wrote a great deal more sensibly than I really thought you capable of, still you are not yet sensible enough to see that it is impossible for me to give an opinion on such things as you refer to me for advice. You tell me that your confessor "feels, and has felt for three or four years, the most decided vocation for the life of a hermit, combined with the cure of souls." I really do not know where such an Order of hermits as that could be found, to have also the cure of souls, unless perhaps it were the missionaries far away in North America, at a distance from the large towns, these are hermits of that kind necessarily. Every Order and the vocation to it is called forth by the wants of the time and the locality. Among large populations and societies of people there are neither hermits nor hermitages. In impassable regions, in mountains, deserts, or heaths,

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they are like a refuge, a tree, a spring, or a seat, but where then is the cure of souls, unless, indeed, the poor souls in purgatory? In our countries there are now no more such, because they would be useless. In Italy and in Switzerland there are still some; indeed, I even saw some myself when I was travelling in Switzerland six years ago, but they were not particularly edifying, and even there, like the convents, they are disappearing; but to live as a hermit, in a foreign country, and take charge of souls, one would require to know the language, and even the dialect of the place, and the whole character of the people, which would be a thing to learn. In my opinion, a pious director of souls could live nowhere as a hermit so comfortably as in Westphalia, where so many villages and farms are scattered up and down. He need only look out for a very poor, forlorn parish, that nobody else likes, and above all things, instead of a cook or a housekeeper, let him have a poor stupid boy, and live with him in poverty and humility ..... You wish me to ask advice from our good Bishop Wittmann; you have made a good choice, certainly. He was a hermit; only on the 8th of March, at a quarter to four in the morning, he left the order, and entered the great world, and appeared at the court of the King of Kings. He died upon the earth, lying on a board, the Cross standing before him. He always slept on that board. Like St. Vincent of Paul, even when he was a parish priest, he never would suffer any female service about him, spoke very little, received no visits, and made none, except to the sick. He hastened like a bowed shadow through the streets, all the children, even rude ones, clung to him, and they always

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played like rats in his empty room, next to which he had a sort of magazine of clothes for these poor children. The children were to him what birds, hares, and deer, &c., are to hermits. He slept at longest three hours, and read and prayed before the Blessed Sacrament, went through the rain to the seminary, held his class every day, was an hour and a half every day as Provost in the Cathedral, he spent every week about eight hours at consistory meetings, took out the students every day for a walk, worked and wrote all himself, preached on all feasts of the Blessed Virgin, preached through Lent, heard confessions, said his office, visited every day the schools, hospitals, and alms-houses, and as he was not yet Bishop, and therefore had not at that time to make his confirmation and episcopal visitations in a diocese of 600,000 souls. He was parish priest of the town, and when he had laboured from four o'clock in the morning till night, he then went out at midnight with a young priest and a lantern, half an hour's distance outside the gate to the churchyard, and they said the *De profundis* together, in alternate verses, for the deceased sheep of his flock. Every year he went to make a few days retreat at what had once been a hermit's chapel in the neighbourhood. He remained forty years at Ratisbon on the same spot, seen daily by all, a public character, indeed, the only one whom all knew and honoured, who helped all, cared for all, and yet was a hermit of the desert; and of his inward life, interior guidance, graces, &c., not a soul ever knew, or ever will know anything. He never spoke of himself, his whole life through, except to his confessor about his sins. This went so far, that in his description of the storming of

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Ratisbon by the French in 1809, when the seminary was burned, he mentions every tin spoon that was saved belonging to the seminary, but does not say one syllable about the fact, that everything he possessed, his library, and all his learned and religious manuscripts were burned. I am sure that if I had asked him the question you have put to me, he would have said: —"Yes, it is good, and pleasing to God to be a hermit, and take care of souls; yes, he ought to do it. . . . ." And then he would have run away, if he had even listened to me so long, for he was a hermit, and did not like to speak, and never delayed anywhere. But that a person should ask advice from others, how to become a hermit, I do not think he would have quite approved of . . . . God bless you!

CLEMENS BRENTANO.

GRETCHEN'S LETTERS.

Coblentz, 12th of June, 1840.

TO ANTONIE.

Your and Veronica's letter has been lying before me for three days. I have often taken up my pen to write to you, and then remained sitting, lost in thought. And what indeed can I say? If it is her vocation, God will break whatever resistance there is to it in her nature, and she will be happy; but it is well that in the *Sacré Cœur*, the vows only become binding for life, after ten years experience of the Order. Even in Nice, she told me, that, in spite of the great disinclination to it of her whole character, she had felt herself impelled to it from her childhood, and that at the end it must come to that. She wrote in a similar sense to me after that, and yet God knows,

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how much it affects me. Who knows, perhaps while I am writing this, the white veil may be falling on her head, while they are singing the Magnificat.

Coblentz, 8th of September, 1840.

It has just struck nine, and I sit once more in my room, on the spot where you sat; but I find the narrow space now too empty and wide, and I first truly realize that I am again alone. You will say that is a bad beginning to the description of a journey, and you are right; but, however I begin, parting always turns up, and that is the very worst beginning for me. The sail from Mainz to Bingen was truly in accordance with my feelings. The wind blew violently, the sky was dark as midnight, thunder and lightning alternated, and the river was moved as I never before saw it. Then I thought of you, of Veronica, of the sea, and I became soft and strong, and wept for sorrow and hope. Yes, it seemed to me that all Nature spoke to me, and that I was to take part in its war. At last the sun broke out, as on the loveliest morning; but when the vessel stopped, the rain streamed from the sky in such torrents that it would have damped the liveliest imagination, and I also returned to my every-day ground. . . . . Do what you please, I will trouble you no more with jealousy; besides, it is a sin that particularly draws us away from God. We can censure it very severely in others, but lose sight of it in ourselves, and excuse it with a thousand reasons, none of which should exist in us.... To-day, James V . . . . . came to see us. He has just arrived from Munich. Clemens, poor fellow, is obliged to change his lodgings, and why? He says, "because he is

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not a humpbacked woman!" S., the artist with whom he was living, has opened a very successful establishment for curing deformed persons, and since he requires more accommodation, Clemens must turn out.

Coblentz, 26th of September, 1840.

I wished to write to you last night really *con amore*, then my mother came, and we had a long conversation about making jam, so at last we parted, half dead asleep. That is generally the way, there seldom blows a lucky wind for writing. Oh, and my father is in his most melancholy frame of mind! I can do nothing but pray for deliverance, for a continuance of it could hardly be endured, unless God giues especial grace for it. Yet in spite of this distress, I am wonderfully calm; even the impetuosity with which I lately tormented you with letters, has quite left me, and I leave it in the hands of God to bring us together when He pleases; but I will not strike out a road to it myself, to which my longing for you often impels me. I made this resolution at Bornhofen, and at the same time, I begged of God to let us remain true to one another, and that our love might never draw us away from Him. The gift may often cause me to forget the Giver. Yes, my nature is still as wild as a young deer; years do not tame me, that must be the work of God, but of course my own will must co-operate! After dinner I looked at the books you left behind, and Werther. Tell me, does that book please you? To me it is too effeminately sweet, and soft, and smooth. Then I went to my sister. On the road home, the sacristan brought me news of the death of Augusta W. It was a great shock to me. Only yes-

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terday, she sent to ask me to go and see her, and I had put it off. What could she have wanted to say to me? Dear, dear, how all are dying around me! Oh, take care of your life for my sake, it does not belong to yourself alone. Oh, if we might only live together, and die together, neither one before the other! Good-night."

Coblentz, 2nd of September, 1841.

Your letter of the 26th from M. is before me. Yesterday, and the day before, I sat down to write to you, but thoughts rushed so through my brain, and when I returned to reality, I was agitated, and could not write, my heart was so full. It is not always true that the mouth speaks when the heart is full. There are things which make us dumb, because no words will utter them, and it has been thus strangely with me, more or less, for a long time. I have a great desire to go to Bornhofen. My mother intends going there next week; but I will let our Blessed Lady's Feast go by, for I should like to spend a few days alone there, and go to the Holy Sacraments. I am in such a frame of mind, that I should like to make a retreat, if I could get an opportunity. How my heart once beat with fear at the thoughts of it! I think the complications of our time, and the feeling of inability to do anything to remedy them, cause this longing to enter into oneself, and there to arrange and build up all that is ruined. Yesterday, I read Diepenbrock's sermon on the "Signs of the Times," and the funeral oration on Pius VIII. You shall find them here. I mentally held out my hand to him, to thank him for

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his words, they do one so much good among this opposition from so many sides.

The 5th of September.

I have just come from church: it is such lovely weather, and so quiet here, as if the birds and I were alone in the world. A few days ago I went to take a walk with O. and old D. He is very melancholy and dull. What others, even the most of them are from opposition, he is from the deepest conviction. Oh dear yes! we might despair if we look at facts, only as such, and are not comforted with the thought that God has all instruments, formed by present occasion, in His hands, and that He can scatter them like dust before the breath of His mouth, if He pleased. The time has come in which the thoughts of many are revealed. May God give us His spirit, and keep us in the faith of His Son, and receive us into the number of the saved, through His pure grace and mercy.

Later.

Now I have been to Bornhofen; my mother changed her mind about it. I joined myself to a procession going the day after our Lady's Nativity, and we arrived at the Rhine in the evening. Oh it was so lovely, I sang and wept all the time. The procession went the long distance of five hours in the most perfect order, with singing and prayer; I have seldom seen such touching devotion. When we arrived at Bornhofen, the church was full of people of every description. There were some there who had come from eighty hours distance. Ottilie and I had a room together. In the morning I went to the Holy Sacra-

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ments, and about midday, I went to C., at Boppard, with the intention of coming back to Bornhofen for the afternoon service, and then to return home by water in the evening, with the people of the procession. On the road thither, however, I met some acquaintances, and was told that all the ferry boats had gone. That distressed me very much, the sun was low, and I had four full hours before me, across the Boppard hill, where only a fortnight ago, a man was murdered. I walked very quickly to the foot of the hill, then I saw a girl with a basket on her head, who wanted to go to Boppard. I took her to the top with me, then she would go no further and went away. I began to pray very fervently to our Blessed Lady, and when I came to a little chapel, I saw an old woman standing, who said: "Come along, we are going the same way." She was going to Rhens. On reaching there she said she would not let me go alone, set down her basket, without listening to me, took my umbrella and my bag, and went with me to Kapellen. Then it was dark, and I was very tired, so I enquired for a donkey —they asked twenty groschen. When my good woman heard that, she was quite shocked, and said: "Not for your life, let the donkey alone, I'll go with you to Coblentz for nothing," and she always repeated she would take nothing, and insisted on going even if it were further. I was quite touched by her kindness, and as I walked beside her, uncertain what to do, I heard my name suddenly called out of a carriage. It was the G——'s; then I pressed my old woman's hand, who would accept nothing, I got into the carriage, and came home late, but quite safe.

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Coblentz, 15th of September, 1841.

It is late in the evening, but I cannot go to bed without sharing my happiness with you. Fancy, this afternoon about five, while I was standing in the kitchen, just as when you came, William Grimm passed the window, followed by Dortchen and Marie. I gave a loud scream, and was quite overcome with surprise and pleasure. I had to go directly with them to the castle, to the Rhine, and then to the Giant Hotel, where we sat together as in old times. You only were wanting, otherwise it was delightful. But good-night, joy has made me quite tired.

Saturday.

Now all is over and back into the old routine. I drove a little way with them, till the ferry boat came and floated me over to my solitary shore, just opposite the Marxburg. As the steam boat was still a good way off, I went into a cottage, and had some coffee, and read the newspapers, to distract my thoughts. Then I went down to the Rhine again, not to lose my steamer, and I sat nearly an hour in a ferry boat, with the old castle above me, and I looked at the Rhine, and the mountains, and the sky, and how everything looks lively or dead, according as the lights or shadows come across it. The air was so mild, and it was everywhere so quiet, I was quite sorry to leave; but the steamer came, and disturbed everything, the air, the water, and myself, and in half an hour I was at home again. So everything comes and disappears, both peace and trouble.

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Coblentz, October, 1842.

I am pleased every time when I am able to write a greeting that will reach you, and our good God has pity on my longing, and gives me often the opportunity to do so. The day before yesterday, I had a dear little letter from Apollonia. She writes about Clemens: "I saw him suffering grievously at Munich, and at Aschaffenburg I saw him die, a dispensation for which I cannot sufficiently thank God. I believe he has suffered a great part of his purgatory in this life, and that he will soon, perhaps may even already behold his God, for whom he longed with so many, many pains."

Whitsuntide, 1843.

You say, I ought to thank God for having so undeniably apportioned me my daily work. Yes, indeed, I do so with my whole soul; but you must do the same, for yours is also undeniably apportioned to you. What in the world could you do more pleasing to God than what you are doing? You will say: "Yes, what I am doing imperfectly and full of defects." But what have we ever been able to do that was perfect? If God did not look rather at our intention and desire than at what we accomplish, oh! then I should lose all courage for prayer as well as work. Let us trust, and if at any place we have nothing more to do, He then considers our task for that time over. If we could only always practise Christian obedience in everything! Hold fast to your first inspiration, which led you to B., and let Him supply by His blessing what does not lie in your talent or power. I also make no plans, and yet when I sit upstairs alone, my

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thoughts amuse themselves with all kinds of illusive combinations. Well, the time will come again when I shall be able to say, "Here you are and here am I!" And even if not, by whatever separate ways our outward life may divide us, still in love and in *one* way, we shall always meet together.

Aschaffenburg, 21st of July, 1843.

To CONSTANCE.

Your letter has put me in a dilemma, from which I can only escape, either by an entire explanation of my ideas and feelings, or by altogether avoiding the questions touched upon. Both of these are impossible to me. For the first, I have not sufficient quiet, and also I have never been able to speak about Antonie's inward life to anybody in the world, and though it would be easier to do that to you than to anybody else, still to write about it, would not do. Therefore I must find a middle way to come to you, and thereby run the risk in your eyes, of remaining in my dilemma. In one part of your letter you say: "How quietly you are going home, while we are sitting as it were in a blocked up cart, and can move neither forward nor backward." Dear Constance! there is much misfortune in such a false view of things, and if you have spoken in that sense to Antonie, you have not done well. If we cannot give people a new and better inward life—and God alone can do that—I think we should not try to disturb their outward life, as long as it contains nothing dangerous. On the contrary, we should help them, as far as we can, to become always more intimate with its duties, and to do everything, however small and in-

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significant it may appear, as in the presence of God. Therein alone is safety for Antonie, for you, and for all whom God thus leads. We can neither make Antonie a Catholic, nor can we open to her a convent; what then can we give her better to do, than just what she is doing? I was very ill last winter; I required her much, and I knew she would have come on the instant, but I said nothing of it to her, not to put her out of her way. It all comes to this, to *learn* to do everything for the love of God. This is the only exercise that brings salvation, and for that we require neither a particular place, nor that we should create for ourselves new circumstances, nor forsake the old ones. My opinion is, she should go on, as God ordains. I am so quiet about it, because I first silenced all my own claims, and God will help me, to prevent them ever from finding words again, till it pleases Him, and is good for us. But now to return to yourself. I beg of you with all my heart to take courage, and to begin every day anew to learn this child's lesson, to do *all*, even the smallest little thing, for the love of God, then our cart will never be blocked up. Only we must have the certainty that we are doing that, to which God gives us strength and talents, and we must be turned aside from it by no inconvenience, fatigue, or humiliation.

Aschaffenburg, 25th of July, 1843.

To Antonie.

I like this place very much, and I also like the people whom I have got to know. Every day I visit old Frau von H., who reminds me very much of your dear mamma, the same mental freshness and

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vivacity. I suppose you have heard of her daughters? They have translated the Life of St. Teresa from the Spanish; I like them very much. Then I was obliged to make another acquaintance, *par force*, Fräulein F., reader to the queen, far in her fifties, exceedingly ugly, but very learned and clever. This good lady had been told all sorts of amiable things about me, so that she made a regular set at me. I avoided her as much as I could; at last I was obliged to give in. She came to us to tea, and in spite of all the great and little ladies there, I was obliged to sit next her on the sofa, where, in fear and desperation, I felt like a hen on a hot plate, and only thought how I could get away. She seemed at first to take me for a learned woman, and snuffed about me in that sense. Then with one blow I drove the idea from her, and after that we were quite good friends, and I kept up such sensible conversations with her, that I was quite enchanted at them myself.

30th of July, 1843.

To-morrow I am going away; in proof of it I myself took my ticket this morning. It is a trick that I played upon myself, not to let myself be persuaded to remain here, for I am very sorry to go away. But I think also, I have had enough recreation. The life here has done me, both bodily and spiritually, so much good, that I feel quite strengthened. I am not at all afraid now of my little home circle. I received good Frau von B.'s letter; oh dear, what veneration! I am in danger of being blinded by the light of my own glory! That is the peculiarity of all good people, so to overrate others. There is a singular irony in the

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contrast of this veneration from others, and our own consciousness of inward poverty and wounds.' And now I am expected to answer her. Her letter is so kind, and yet so empty-headed, and I know that mine will be far more so, and I am to pay fifteen groschen postage for that. For that money my poor could get three loaves of black bread, and they would find more substance in that, than Frau von B. would in a dozen of my letters! Now, do be cheerful, and keep quiet on the path you have struck out, from a *pure intention.* Put aside all doubt, and remain faithful in your daily, most unobtrusive duties. I feel always more and more, that only in them our peace and happiness lie hidden. Though you will often have care, where is there a condition in the world without that addition? According to my conviction, that is the band by which God binds our inconstant hearts, to lead them back within His own bounds, when too much earthly love has turned them aside from Him. Forgive me these words: only the deepest emotion urges me to express them. It is really no tutelage on my part, but because I always feel more and more within myself, how it disturbs, and makes us weary in all good, to neglect the possible, and strive after the impossible.

Coblentz, 15th of September, 1843.

I have not written to you for so long that I am quite pleased to have again a quiet hour. Yes, dear, however differently God may guide our souls, He still leads us both. He makes it easier for me, because He knows what a giddy thing I am, and that I directly start aside from the road when it becomes

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somewhat steep. Truly, if you had the gifts, which God lets me every day find in my Church, they would produce quite different fruits in you than in me. Thomas à Kempis says very truly, "It is no great thing to serve God in the midst of consolation, but to be faithful to Him even when He withdraws it, therein consists the perseverance of the children of God." Dear, dear Antonie! do not lose this blessing by discouragement, that is what vexes me so in you, because it lames one's best powers. St. Teresa says; "Act as if you loved God, and you will love Him." Let us do that too, praying, working, speaking, being silent, not when and how it pleases *us*, but when and how it pleases God. Who is not afraid at the measure of his sins? But yet it must not keep us away from God. As long as He lets us know our misery, so long His grace is disposed to deliver us from it, *if we put our own hand to the work.* On our Blessed Lady's Nativity, I had a great pleasure. I was at Bornhofen: oh, if you had been with me! it was so lovely that I could scarcely ask for better in heaven.

Coblentz, 19th of September, 1843.

DEAR ANTONIE,

You are the shrine, in which I at all times deposit my heart and my thoughts. I was very much touched by an account given to me yesterday by two girls belonging to Münster, who returned from Strasburg, about a convent of the nuns of the Good Shepherd. You know they receive fallen women, who wish to amend. When their time of penance is over, and they wish to return to the world, they are not let out till the sisters have found a safe good service for them

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to enter; but if they wish to remain, they take the three vows, and live in a separate wing of the house, apart from the sisters, but like them, under strict enclosure. The superioress of the sisters is also theirs, and they have the same rule, only they have a different habit, theirs being brown; but they lead an equally severe life. They are called "Magdalens," and the aspirants to this division of the order, "Penitents." These details are only external, but I do not like to omit anything of what I have heard, and think what a blessing, what a grace! In the house at Strasburg there are sixty of these Magdalens, and fifty aspirants. My informants from Münster saw the clothing of one of them; they said it was the most touching, heart-affecting thing possible. Oh happy she, who can close her life in such a service! On our journey to Monpellier, I heard of such a house, and my whole heart was drawn to it. I went there to beg the superioress to take us in for the time of our stay; and she would have done it, had not letters from W., and also from home, prevented our going, as it was thought unsuitable. In my whole life I can never forget the impression the Reverend Mother made upon me. Let me be silent; what I have written will be sufficient for you to follow my feelings. Take nothing into your head: I desire nothing more now in this world. God's ways were always different from mine, and even when I thought I had done the best, it was a dream. I have now given my remaining life into the hands of God, where He wishes me to be, I desire to follow, and nothing more. This resignation of my will—deficient and poor though it is, and often led astray by all the follies of my natural and spoiled in-

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clinations—God has blessed with a deep peace, which even my sins and spiritual miseries cannot disturb, but yet it is a grace which might be lost. Veronica's innocent request made me laugh. Thank God, her trials are such, that she still thinks of silver spoons. How gladly I would send her my six silver teaspoons, if they were not just now circulating in the pawn shops! They were my last valuables, my christening gift; on that account I held them till now in honour, but the distress is too great here, and they had to go. Dear Antonie! if you will follow my request and my feeling, you will remain and endure. Whoever throws away one cross finds another, and if it is self-chosen, it is only a heavier one. Oh, how often I have myself unfortunately experienced this. I write this not without a struggle. God knows that no selfishness drives me to it; such might perhaps come over me, if I were to look far out into the distant future, for at present we are parted, wherever you may pitch your tent. So endure: and what is all love, if it is only to last in the good days! And then forgive me if I have here hurt you with a single word. You are my dearest treasure in this world, I would do anything rather than give you pain.

Coblentz, 7th of December, 1843.

I should probably have written to you sooner, but what is there much to say in such a monotonous life? One day passes like another. What shall I now tell you? If the clouds fly quickly or slowly, if they come from the west or the east, that is all that I can see from my sofa. But think no harm of that. What used formerly to press on me like mountains,

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His hand helps me to bear it all, only one thing is bad, when I forget it is His hand. In good days one does not do so, but when dryness and spiritual misery come, then it is time to sharpen the memory. And now, keep yourself quiet, and let *one* cross be enough for you, and God will take care of me. He does so graciously beyond all measure, where no friend, no man can help, there His love and faithfulness are often so visibly maintained. How I felt that even in my last illness! You call it a happiness to die in early years, yes, if we die in our first innocence, then certainly it is a happiness. But I can only thank God for life, for each new day. Farewell! my whole being is greatly drawn to you. No separation can disturb it; and it does not make me at all uneasy, but rather raises me up, where from my own indolence I might break down.

Coblentz, 8th of January, 1844.

I had last night such a singular dream: it will not leave my thoughts, and cannot have been given me for nothing. I thought I was dying, and that nobody was with me but Billchen. My bed was already prepared as if for a dead person, it was straw, with a sheet stretched over it. I lay uncomfortably, but I thought it was all the same, I would soon die! Then I remembered a service of kindness that I had refused to my mother, and I longed anxiously to set it right. After that a priest with a covered chalice passed my bed, and I understood that he had offered the Holy Sacrifice for me, and that thereby I was reconciled to God. Then I died quietly and peacefully. I do not think that this signifies that my death is near,

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although my first thought was a prayer for a happy end, but why should not God speak to the soul by a serious dream as well as any other way? God requires bodily and spiritual mortification of the senses, and death to all of our own selves, so as to find a happy end in the merits and sacrifice of our Lord. That is my interpretation. In my early years I was helped on to the right way again, by a dream of the Mother of God and the little Infant Jesus. God grant that this, which is perhaps a more impressive warning, may not be in vain. Perhaps you laugh at my dreams and interpretations, but they make me very serious and thoughtful, yet I will not take you any further into my reflections. But what sort of foolish thoughts have you got, that you could lose me in some other manner than by death? Formerly, when I destroyed the best part of my life with selfishness and passion, when I sought myself rather than you in all my affection, then these thoughts never occurred to you, and they might have been nearer to you then than now, where God in His mercy has shown me all the hiding-places of self-love and selfishness, and helps me in the battle. Here is my hand, Antonie, give me yours, and let us continue to help each other to come to God, and to ourselves. Yes, indeed, love is no child's play. God grant that we may both have found that for our good!

Coblentz, Feast of the Three Kings, 1845.

My evening hour has struck, the door is locked, and my heart is well content, because your letter is there. What nonsense you talk about "toleration," and the like! I never "tolerated" you, first

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I *hated* and then I *loved* you. Only one thing vexes me, that I did it too selfishly. We are outwardly separated, but I know no one with whom I live inwardly so uninterruptedly. Do not tear up one of my pages; I send you every stupid letter, and have the confidence, that every one comes right to you. So our letters are on the road to Veronica? You say there is such a longing tone in hers. That does not at all surprise me. The more the soul disengages itself from all that is earthly and temporal, the greater must be its longing desire for God, and the undisturbed possession of Him. I am convinced she is quite cheerful, for this is a pain that brings only sweetness. You wish me to look for some of her writing to send you —I almost thank God that I am unable to do so, since long ago I delivered all Veronica's letters and papers to the flames, because I felt that turning them over and reading them, instead of doing me good, fanned a bad fire within me, and robbed me of inward peace. And this sacrifice, which cost me bitter tears, healed my heart.

Later.

Just as I was in the best vein for writing, a little body came, and with endless long speeches, put me so off my balance, that I could only remember Dean S.'s sermon:—"Must people be unbearable, if they are pious." It is true the agreeable pious ones are rare. Yesterday, I went with my work (I am knitting a child's swaddling band) to Sister Cecile; yes, she *is* an amiable soul! she does me good every time I see her with her honest good sense. Sister Columba also came, and showed me with great plea-

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sure some white neckties that she had got for her old men, for Sundays and holidays: "Car celà relève un peu!"

Coblentz, 19th of February, 1845.

I have just read in the newspaper, that the choice of a Prince-Bishop of Breslau has unanimously fallen upon F. Diepenbrock. How I should thank God, if he accepts it! I know nothing that would rejoice my heart so deeply and truly, for the Church's sake. But I fear he will refuse it again. What will the people here say to it? No one knows him well. Some hate him, because they think he leans to a certain side. Others honour him for the same reason, and both are wrong. If F. Diepenbrock were a close, worldly-wise man, I could understand it, but he is so honest and true, and so devoted with his whole soul to the Church, that I cannot comprehend this effect. Certainly, Sailer, his father, friend and model, went that same way.

Coblentz, 10th of March, 1845.

Not to spoil the day for you with useless thoughts, I tell you, that my sore throat is almost gone, I am also no longer languid, I go to church, and am happy. Oh if I could only in a single thing make you understand with what love and faithfulness God has helped me during this time, outwardly so desolate and sad. I know of no human words to tell it. Even your "little infidelities," which I do not like in and for themselves, He has turned for me into deep and unspeakable blessing. I know these times will change again, I have felt that change so often; but God's love

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and faithfulness remain the same in dreary as in happy days. In the evening, when the children have gone to bed, I read. Now I am reading Görres's book, much in it would please you. What he says about Goethe moved me to tears. During my illness I also read Clemens Brentano's fairy tales. How much melancholy and sorrow are concealed under the bright play of colours, in jest and irony, I recognise himself in every page!

Coblentz, Holy Saturday, 23rd of March, 1845.

Out of doors everything lies deep in snow; but it seems also as if Nature would to-day begin her resurrection. The sun shines so warm in at the window, that I have let the fire go out. Altogether it looks quite like spring in my room. The fig-tree stretches over the door, and has such fresh green leaves, as if it knew nothing of the winter outside. In order that you may see that I conceal nothing, I will tell you that I feel languid and weary, and I am going to try a rest. God preserve you, and grant us soon to meet again!

THE END.

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argument. They are men of learning, of piety, and our pastors; nor need they hang their heads with shame. It warmed my heart to see how nobly our Irish Bishops stood before the noblest assembly of this world, in the grand Vatican Council. These men God has given us as guides; and if so, he has given them light to know what to condemn."

"Oh, pshaw! this is all cant. Hav'n't we reason as well as they; and can't we see things, and judge for ourselves?"

"Let me ask you, Frank, a few questions, and then tell me what you think. You are a carpenter; you know how to cut up planks, and saw them, and plane them, and then to fit them nicely and closely together, and to make a good car or carriage if you like. Now, do you think my Lord Chancellor, with all his learning, could do it as well?"

"He'd make a splendid botch of it, I guess. Why, he couldn't drive a nail straight, let alone do work as nice as that?"

"And why, Frank?"

"Of course, because he is not a carpenter. He didn't learn the trade as I did."

"Then, let me ask you another question. Could *you* decide law cases as well as he?"

"Do you take me to be a fool? No I couldn't."

"No, Frank, you'd make a splendid botch of them. And why?"

"That is his business. He studied the law—he knows its knots, and he has mastered its difficulties. But what has all this to do with Education?"

"Another question, Frank, and I'll show you. Now, don't you know that theology, as a science, is as hard, to say the least, as the law?"

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